More Bits from Blinkbonny

BY

JOHN STRATHESK.

MORE BITS FROM BLINKBONNY.

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NANCIE'S KNOWE

MORE BITS FROM BLINKBONNY

A TALE OF SCOTTISH VILLAGE LIFE BETWEEN
1831 AND 1841

BY

JOHN STRATHESK
AUTHOR OF 'BITS FROM BLINKBONNY,' 'LITTLE BLUEBIRD,' 'ELDER LOGAN'S STORY ABOUT THE KIRKS,' AND 'MISS GRAHAM'S PROTEGS'

With Six Original Illustrations

EDINBURGH
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PREFACE.

MANY of the readers of the volume, *Bits from Blinkbonny*, which appeared in 1882, have urged the author to tell them something more about the homely inhabitants and old-fashioned ways of that rural Scottish village. Other and perhaps wiser readers have advised him to beware of risking another volume, fortifying their opinion by reminding him "that 'Uncle Tom' had no brother."

Unquestionably, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Mrs. H. Beecher Stowe, with almost magical genius, sounded chords that thrilled the bosom of humanity; and, to use the words of her late gifted and loving compatriot, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "When she passed, it seemed like the ceasing of most exquisite music." Still her *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*, *Dred*, etc., have alike their place and power in literature, as truly as the modest lily of the valley and the sweet forget-me-not amongst flowers are, to some minds, as beautiful

and as suggestive as the rose, queen of the garden though she be.

In the following "More Bits," the author, reversing the natural order, treats of an earlier decade—1831–41. He has not such a soul-stirring background as the "Disruption" of 1843, nor such a lovable heroine (pardon the expression) as "Bell o' the Manse;" and perhaps "Earlier Bits" would have been a more appropriate title, for he has endeavoured to portray schoolboy days and those of earlier manhood.

As a natural consequence, he deals with more homely individuals and incidents, not placing before himself such an ambitious ideal as the eminent Royal Academician's style of painting in "Bits," which suggested his first title, but rather the old-fashioned patched bedcover, made up of common materials of all shapes, sizes, and shades, which now graces Bell's—I beg her pardon—Mrs. Tait of Blackbrae's cosy back bedroom.

The author has the same difficulty as formerly in fixing the precise locality of Blinkbonny. To him it has a "name," but no local habitation. Scotch villages, while they may not supply heroes or heroines, can still furnish "characters" and events. In these, the humorous and pathetic aspects of human life are so closely intermixed, that, "to hold the

mirror up to nature," they must often be recorded side by side. At all events, the author has been led to do this, in his endeavours to arrest and to embody in the "mother tongue" these receding memorials of the past and passing generations.

He has tried to make this volume so far independent of its precursor, as not to render it necessary for the reader of the one to have read the other. He also gladly avails himself of this opportunity to convey his most sincere thanks to the public, and to the "press," for the warm reception which has been accorded, at home and abroad, to *Bits from Blinkbonny*, and to its heroine, "Bell o' the Manse." Not least to the Comtesse Agenor de la Gasparin, for her spontaneous request to put the book into a French dress, which she has so admirably done, in *Le Pasteur de Blinkbonny, son troupeau, sa femme, et sa servante.*

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MORE BITS FROM BLINKBONNY.

—o—

CHAPTER I.

AULD LANGSYNE.

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o' lang syne?"—*Burns.*

MY old friend and schoolfellow, Andrew Taylor, and I were taking a leisurely stroll, on a lovely evening in the month of June 1884. We were going to "Nancie's Knowe," a little hillock, easy of ascent, that rose among the braes at the back of Blinkbonny. Its sides sloped gently, and were covered with a soft grassy sward, the delight of the children of the village; while on its summit there were some fine old Scotch firs, on which the sunlight streamed, making their red trunks and stems seem all the brighter from the dark green of their thick covering of foliage.

We had left the Broomhill road, which skirted the

foot of the Knowe, and were taking a breath at its base, enjoying the fresher air that we had reached, as well as the merry gambols and the hearty, gleesome noise of the children who were romping and rolling about its sunny braes.

"We've seen the day, Robert," said Andrew, pointing with his staff to the happy groups before us.

> "'We twa hae run about the braes,
> And pu'd the gowans fine;
> But we've wandered mony a weary foot,
> Sin' auld lang syne.'"

Then, pointing to the Blinkie Burn,

> "'We twa hae paidl't i' the burn
> Frae mornin' sun till dine;
> But seas between us braid hae roared
> Sin' auld lang syne.'

"We've seen the day," continued he, "when we could have run like hares from the elm tree at the Schule Brae to the top of Nancie's Knowe *within* the ten minutes; but now we are rather 'afraid of that which is high.' Still, in all my wanderings, I never saw a finer view than we get from the Knowe there; so we'll make leisurely for the top."

"Yes, Andrew," was my reply (for in our easy rambles we used the old schoolboy names of sixty years ago); "it needs no research to discover how

this village got its name. The sun does not *blink* on a bonnier spot."

When we had reached the top, and the snug little place lay at our feet, with its picturesque surroundings of hill and valley, river and woodland, we felt that the only suitable names for the strath and the village were precisely those they bore—Strathbonny and Blinkbonny. And, familiar as we were with every nook and corner of the landscape, we "turned and gazed, and turned again;" for the evening was a beautiful one.

The rays of the setting sun were tinging with golden hue the bright green of the fresh foliage; the clear stream of the Blinkie Burn, as it crept down by the Annie Green, sparkled or shimmered between its banks, where the hawthorn was hoary with blossom, and the leaves of the poplar, alder, and birch trees flickered from glowing green to downy whiteness. The burn was lost to sight as it crept round the Kirk Brae, where the windows of the church and manse glimmered as if they had been on fire; but it reappeared on the south side, emerging apparently out of a wooded ravine, crept round the back of the village in many a winding stream, and onwards through Strathbonny, until it joined the river which flowed through the strath.

Opposite the village the valley was about three miles wide; but from east to west the eye could roam over nearly twenty miles of Strathbonny, with its clear winding river gleaming here and there in the sunlight, its fertile fields and grassy meadows, its whitewashed farmhouses and occasional villages, girt round and sentinelled by pastoral hills, most of them green to the summit, suggestive of comfortable homesteads and as comfortable flocks; but here and there were darker and heath-clad mountains, with conical peaks or long, wavy, undulating outlines, varied by scaurs and rocky knolls. Hill burns occasionally gleamed out in foamy whiteness, forming zig-zag cascades as they rushed onwards, but more commonly these could only be traced by the rocky dells they had formed, or the overhanging copsewood that grew on their banks.

Our talk, as we rested on a rustic seat in front of the firs on Nancie's Knowe, was of schoolboy days, of reminiscences happy and saddening.

"That book o' yours, Robert," said Andrew, "is, as I told you before, 'no bad, considerin';' but there are lots of more 'Bits from Blinkbonny' that you must put together. There's, for instance, the schule, or rather the schules; for George Lockhart's 'bit' side-schule was a queer place, and George himself was

a wonderfu' industrious body. And Mr. Torrance was as good a parish teacher as ever was in broad Scotland. What a job he had wi' Big Murray! Write something about him, and the fairs, and the plays, and the characters o' oor young days. You'll be mair bathered how to get it a' in, than where to get matter."

Mr. Taylor went over a long list of names and events interwoven with our early days at Blinkbonny; and we had a rambling chat, which recalled incidents that had long lain dormant in our memories.

Just before we rose to descend the Knowe, he said, "Memory's a queer thing. Mine's is like a lot o' sheets o' blotsheet, or 'blottin'-paper,' as they call it nowadays. Ye've seen, if ye used it new, that when you turned over the blotsheet ye could read the letter fine; an' I once got a red face wi' that, for I had been writin' a partic'lar letter,—a love letter, in fact,—and didna my sister read it a' on the new bit blotsheet, an' sair she teased me about writing 'hopping' instead of 'hoping.' Weel, some pages o' my memory's like that yet—clear and ready. Then, after ye've used the blotsheet for a month or twa, nae doubt the letters are a' there, but that ravelled an' a' throughither that ye can neither make buff nor stye o' them, and the maist o' the

pages o' my memory are so tattered that I canna follow out ae thing without its getting mixed up wi' ithers."

The setting sun was now beginning to sink behind Dunsarg, the highest hill in the district, which lay about six miles distant from Blinkbonny, putting the western and northern sides of the strath into dark shadow, but making the southern and eastern sides look more lovely by the contrast.

"Did ever anybody see a bonnier sun-blink, or a bonnier place for the sun to blink on?" said Andrew in raptures. Then, turning to me, he said, "Robert Martin, I remember when your brother George died (you were at the college at the time), and your father himself was in but poor health, that he spoke to my father about getting you to give up thoughts o' bein' a minister an' takin' up his business, for you were the only other son. He said, 'Get what parish kirk he may, he'll never get a bonnier place to live in than this.' Mony a time my father, honest man, came owre thae words; and he was happy when you left the college frankly, and settled amang us."

By this time we had reached the village, and as we parted Andrew's last words were, "Noo, sit doon this very nicht, and write 'More Bits from Blinkbonny,' an' begin wi' the schules."

The chat I had had with Mr. Taylor, and his graphic description of scenes long since huddled up in odd corners of my memory, set me a-scribbling; but I fear that, to use his simile, I will not only have to decipher long-forgotten sheets of my cast-off blotting-paper, but to draw from other, and perhaps as confusing sources, in these "More Bits from Blinkbonny," which, at his request, I shall begin with some references to "Big Murray."

Jamie Murray, better known around Blinkbonny as "Big Murray," was a dull soft boy with a dumpling-looking face. His mother, Tibbie Murray, had had an eventful and sad life. Her first husband had fallen a victim to small-pox after they had been married five years. She and Jamie her son had at the same time a sore struggle with the same malady, but they pulled through it, although their faces retained very rough evidences of the severity of the ordeal—rougher than anything we see, or almost can conceive nowadays, since vaccination and increased medical skill have done such good battle with this loathsome disease.

Tibbie had, moreover, a peculiar squint in her left eye, which projected ungainsomely and had a bluish film over it; its movements, as well as those of its eyelid, were constant, spasmodic, singular. A neighbour, on being asked by a stranger what

Tibbie was like, summed up the marks whereby to identify her by saying, "She's terrible sair pock-markit, an' she has a ringle ee, that's aye wammle-wammlin' about either it or its lid. If ye see her yince, ye'll easy ken her again amang a thousand."

Tibbie wrought hard to maintain her son and herself. Since her widowhood she earned her bread as a washerwoman, and had bought an enormous tub from the cooper, which, by some mistake in measurement, had been made absurdly large. It had proved not deep enough for the butcher, too large for either the brewer, the candlemaker, or the dyer, so Tibbie got a great bargain of it, and it proved a good investment. Its ample capacity attracted large quantities of blankets, which Tibbie scoured in the genuine old Scotch fashion, by putting them into her tub, "Tibbie's ark," as it was called, and tramping them thoroughly amongst a soapy mixture called a "graith," which Tibbie skilfully compounded out of singular ingredients, according to her ideas of what they required.

It is quite unnecessary to describe minutely the process. Who does not know what "trampin'" blankets means? Suffice it to say that Tibbie was tall, strong-boned, muscular, and very solid, as if made for such work; she was, moreover, an early riser, and when working at home she was "kilted" and at it by

four o'clock in the morning. Even when she had to go to an employer's house, she hoisted her "ark" about the same early hour, regardless alike of the disturbance thereby caused to neighbours or customers, and of the extinguished look which the inverted tub gave to herself, for it served her for bonnet, umbrella, and implement. She preferred to work outside, in a back-green, an open shed, or an outhouse, rather than in a kitchen, for washing-houses were very rare, as well as "owre close" for her. She was also utterly indifferent to any remarks that were made, or jokes that were cracked upon her, and tramped stolidly on and on, round and round, and plodded and wrung away, until the "scourin'" was drying on the hedges early in the day, and, Tibbie's day's work being over, she hoisted her "ark," and piloted her way home as best she could, with such a headpiece.

Owing to his mother's often "working out," Jamie's meals were irregular, rough, and of the readiest to hand. Still he throve and grew,—"warstled up someway," as poor children must do, and *do* do,—and when about five years old, she entered him at George Lockhart's school, "partly to keep him oot o' mischief," to use her own words, "an' he would be aye learnin' something."

George Lockhart had been by occupation a weaver,

and by repute a genius and a prominent radical; but an accident to his knee made him unfit to work the "treddles" of his loom, and he started a school for —so the written "prospectus" ran that was stuck up in a few shop windows in Blinkbonny—"teaching the elementary branches of education at very moderate wages."

His weaving-shop was converted into a schoolroom; it had a low ceiling, a not very well thatched roof, two windows at each side and two smaller "boles" at the end, which were hinged like doors, and generally stood open— a very necessary arrangement. What panes were in the windows were "yokes" taken from the thick central parts of cylindrical sheets of glass, with a sort of bull's eye in the middle, nearly an inch in thickness, which gradually tapered down all round to the thickness of ordinary glass, resembling a rough lens; these had been selected for their strength, but a few of them had failed, and been replaced by sheets of paper. The door was low and rather the "worse of the wear;" the floor was of rough, ill-jointed, and very fragmentary pavement. The furniture consisted of a few rickety desks and shaky forms, a large desk on four legs, and a three-footed stool. On the walls were maps of ancient Palestine, Europe, and Scotland, tattered and sorely finger-marked. The

air, the light, the furniture were all bad—although all that regular sweeping, weekly scrubbing, and yearly whitewashing could do to keep all fresh was carefully attended to. Still the fees were small, and not very rigidly exacted, and, although the education was rough, and the discipline peremptory and primitive, "Lockhart's" school had generally upwards of fifty scholars.

When Tibbie Murray brought Jamie to the school she paid a month's wages "forehanded" (the whole amount was sixpence). This was not a common incident in George Lockhart's experience, and it prepossessed him in favour of Jamie; he resolved to make "something" of him, and he certainly tried hard to do it. He placed the soft-fed overgrown boy at the end of the form which stood near his own stool, but he could not get the dumpling-coloured face and the large blue-grey vacant eyes to rest on either book or board. Their sole occupation at school was watching the teacher, and they followed him as the needle does the magnet. Lockhart tried him in every way: by his desk, at his side standing on a form, in a corner with his face to the wall, with older scholars, but *on* the book he could not get Jamie to look. He coaxed, encouraged, threatened, and punished him, but in vain; only when a wasp was on the window did Jamie's

eye cease to follow the master's, and even then it travelled restlessly between the teacher and the insect. It took months to get the alphabet into him, although he had original methods of his own by which to identify the small letters; *h* was to him a "chair," *s* was a "cleek," and *g* a "bumbee." In every branch his progress was slow, and Lockhart, even at the sacrifice to himself of the regularly paid fees, advised his mother to put him to the parish school, and to make him learn his tasks well at home, for he could make little more of him.

Murray and I began to attend the parish school at the same time. He was nearly eight years old and I was only six, but we were put into the same class in the "wee schule," called nowadays the "infant department," or the "junior division." Mr. Torrance was the name of the teacher in those days. Mr. Sinclair was the "helper,"—for pupil teachers or "certificated assistants" were unknown in Blinkbonny,—and sadly were his faculties of mind and body taxed to make "Big Murray" learn, or even look at anything, excepting straight and always at himself. Mr. Sinclair for two or three weeks spent some time with Jamie after the other scholars had gone, and partly succeeded in getting him to take some interest in his lessons; and on one occasion he asked Willie

Rankine, a bright boy of about eleven years of age, and a good scholar, to stay in for a little and help Murray.

This proved no easy task, and Willie's "blowing-up" of Murray was energetic and very uncomplimentary.

"Look on your book, man," urged Willie; "look on, can ye no? Dinna look at me. Be quick. Say the words after me. I dinna want to stay late, for Johnnie Leitch said, if I went to his house this afternoon, he would let me see his squirrel."

The word "squirrel" wrought like a charm on Murray; he actually laughed, said "he yince kent a squirrel's nest," and asked Willie if he would take him to see Johnnie Leitch's.

"Yes," said Willie, "if ye'll read the lesson *without a word* I'll take ye. So begin—quick, now!"

Murray was going on wonderfully, and had got half through his task with some slight mistakes, when he suddenly stopped and said, "Has't a lang tail?"

"If you do not read your lesson *without a word*," said Willie firmly, and without looking off the book, "I'll no' take you to see the squirrel."

This threat *told* on Murray; he applied what little brains he had, got through the lesson fairly well, felt pleased with himself, indeed almost proud, ran with Willie to Johnnie Leitch's, and greatly enjoyed the squirrel's lithe, nimble movements as it darted about

its cage, and made its little mill "birl" round swiftly. After this, Murray got on better; the squirrel and Willie Rankine between them had wrought some change in him. He got to read fairly, but his writing was outrageous, and arithmetic was a sore, sore point with him.

"If I could only get him to master the simple rules," said Mr. Sinclair, "I would be delighted; but he seems utterly incapable of seeing that six and four make ten."

Simple rules, Mr. Sinclair? *Simple?* Simple to "Big Murray"? His mother, although her own arithmetic was very meagre, tried her utmost to ground him in very simple "*addition.*" Her "counters" were grey peas; many a winter evening the two spent over them. Jamie was fond of peas, and when he was right in his answer he got the "count" to eat. But alas! a small bowlful lasted him for two months.

Not many doors from Tibbie's house lived Strachan Gemmell the tailor, a poor hard-working man. His wife was a confirmed invalid, whose recovery was hopeless. Tibbie was her unpaid but faithful nurse, and "kindness itself" in her own homely way. "It was untellin'," what Tibbie did for poor Mrs. Gemmell, as well as for Strachan and their two children. Indeed, nobody can adequately estimate what the poor do for the poor.

After Mrs. Gemmell's death, Tibbie "lookit in" daily, to "gie things a bit sort up," and effectively she did it. As economy had to be practised in both houses, Tibbie brought her "seam to sew" at Strachan's candle, thereby saving a little, and she brought Jamie with her. Strachan and his two girls helped Jamie as much as Willie Rankine and the squirrel had done. The peas were grand counters and grand fun, and disappeared more quickly when the *three* scholars had a chance of winning them by correct answers.

Even Strachan himself began to study "social arithmetic." His wife's illness left him poor, and unable to meet his Martinmas small house rent. He began to think that there was no use of two rents and two fires any more than there was of two candles; then he soliloquized, "She's certainly no' bonny—that's a fac', no mistake; she's onything but that,—it's a pity that she's sae ill-faured" (ill-favoured),—"an' certainly yon's a FEARFU' EE; but she's as gude as I am, an' as gude as I'll get, so I'll tell her that I'm gaun to marry her, an' be by wi't."

He did not think anything more to be necessary, nor was there. Tibbie did not insist on her "due share o' courtin'." She certainly was surprised when Strachan rather abruptly told her that she "maun

gie up her house, for he was gaun to marry her, an' the sooner the better." "Ye'll see yersel'," continued he, "that it will be a savin' a' ways—in rent, an' fire, an' time, an' a' ways. Your things and mine's putten thegither will mense the house; so, Tibbie, just get yer bits o' sticks owre here as sune as ye can, 'ark' an' a'; we're no chickens, so that's settled."

He had ceased sewing while saying this, but as soon as he was done speaking, he set to work again.

The idea of such a proposal had never entered Tibbie's mind, but she did not take long to digest it. "I never thocht on that, but I see't noo; we micht dae waur," was all that fell from her on that part of the subject.

An early day and hour were fixed, the minister was trysted, and agreed to come to the tailor's house, for there would have been a noisy merrymaking if the marriage had been at the manse. It would have been noisier than it turned out to be, had not Tibbie "flitted" to her *new* house at the same early hour at which she used to go out to work, "sorted it up," and cooked the wedding feast, which consisted of "a haggis and a curran' dumplin'." The minister dropped quietly into Strachan's at midday, and Tibbie Murray became Mrs. Gemmel—Big Murray and Annie Gemmell acting as groomsman and bridesmaid; and all, especially Jamie,

had enjoyed to the full the haggis and the dumpling,—before the "wild callants" had any chance of playing pranks on the happy couple.

The tailor was sewing away after the marriage and the feast as usual in his cross-legged fashion before four o'clock in the afternoon. Tibbie employed herself in carrying several "rakes" of water, to be ready for a "scouring" on the following day; and, when the idlers gathered round the door at night, expecting to see the minister arrive, they saw that Tibbie had two stoups full of water standing suspiciously near the window, and, fearing that she might damp their ardour with these (not a pleasant prospect on a cold October evening), the mob melted away; and it became a byword in Blinkbonny, "as quiet as Strachan Gemmell's marriage wi' Tibbie Murray;" for her maiden name had been the same as that of her first husband, and she continued to be "Tibbie Murray."

Although Annie Gemmell, the elder of the tailor's first family, was a year younger than Big Murray, she was a better scholar than he, and, by the exercise of tact and patience, she got the big soft boy to stick to his lessons, and, although he continued to be the dunce of his class, he at length got into the 'big schule," taught by Mr. Torrance himself, where we will find him in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE PARISH SCHOOL.

"An' arena we but laddies yet,
An' get the name o' men?
How sweet at ane's fireside to live
The happy days again,
When we were at the schule, my frien',
When we were at the schule,
An' fling the snawba's owre again
We flang when at the schule!"—*Latto.*

MR. TORRANCE, the parish schoolmaster of Blinkbonny, was a well-read, scholarly man. He had for two sessions been a student at the University of Glasgow; and several pupils, who intended to follow out learned professions, had been sufficiently advanced by him in Latin, Greek, and mathematics, to enable them to go direct to college, and to take a good place in these subjects the first year of their attendance.

What an amount of hard work he went through himself! What an amount he got out of his scholars, and that with a will! These would number upwards of one hundred and fifty, their ages ranging from four years to sixteen. Generally he had a young man as

assistant, called "the helper," to distinguish him from Mr. Torrance, who was "the master." The helper's department was "the wee schule," where the younger classes were taught; for in these days female teachers were not in vogue in country schools, and "industrial work" was never attempted, I doubt indeed if it was even thought of.

Mr. Torrance taught the elder scholars in the "big schule." Monday morning was the principal "Bible lesson" day, and creditable alike to master and scholars was the accuracy with which psalms and verses of Scripture were repeated. The biographies of such Bible characters as Joseph, Daniel, etc., were entered into minutely, and so treated as to prove highly interesting as well as instructive. So complete, indeed, was his teaching of Bible subjects, that the Rev. Mr. Walker of Middlemoor used to say "he would be afraid to preach before Mr. Torrance's scholars—they answered like ministers."

Nearly all could repeat—perhaps "rattle off" comes nearer the mark—every question in the Shorter Catechism without a mistake, and the older scholars could give "proofs" and "illustrations" of either its doctrines or its precepts with considerable intelligence. Each scholar was also required to repeat one of the proverbs of Solomon—none to be repeated twice on

the same day. And Mr. Torrance, by occasionally making the "foot," the middle, or the head of the class begin, secured that every scholar had a good stock of proverbs laid up and ready for use. Often was the Book of Proverbs scanned for a "new one," as anything specially good in this way was rewarded by promotion to the top of the class.

Big Murray once mounted from the bottom of the class—"Doobie," as this post was called—to the head for repeating a proverb from the Book of Ecclesiastes: "A living dog is better than a dead lion."

"Capital, James!" said Mr. Torrance, with a beaming smile on his face. "That's first-rate—first-rate! You are the living lion to-day. Go to the top of the class."

Murray's dumpling face got actually red; his eyes wandered round the scholars, who were laughing quietly. But he did not move.

"Come away, James," repeated Mr. Torrance.

But Jamie's head was down, and, although the boys beside him were nudging and pushing him, he was immovable, until Mr. Torrance himself led him to the top of the class, whereat (a very rare thing in the school) the scholars set up a merry "hurrah." He, however, did not stay long "Dux," and soon found his old and more comfortable post at the extreme rear.

Once again, however, he performed the same feat; for Annie Gemmell, after a Sabbath's hard dinning at him, got into his head, "If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength; but wisdom is profitable to direct." James's tongue could not get round "whet;" it was a new word to him, and "*wet* the edge" would come.

"Whet, Jamie, whet; it's no '*wet*,' it's *whet*," said Annie again and again. But still Jamie said "wet," until she struck on the illustration: "It's to make it WHITTLE easy; that's cut easy;" and as Jamie had often "whittled a stick," his tongue and his head between them got round "whet."

When he repeated the proverb aloud in the school —and it was long for a proverb as well as for him— the pleasant scene of Jamie getting to the head of the class was re-enacted, this time without Mr. Torrance's help, who, however, said, "James, James, I wish you would whet the edge of your head, and put to more strength, for generally your iron is deplorably blunt."

I need not enter into detail on the daily work of a parish school. It was constant, hard, and varied, and, with an interval of about half an hour, went on from nine o'clock in the morning till four in the afternoon.

Mr. Torrance always had his scholars well in hand.

They respected as well as feared him. Those who had been longest under him came thoroughly to understand their work, and to do it up to their powers. Punishment was not common, and never excessive. The cane and the "wee taws" were occasionally, but mildly used to quicken a lazy scholar, but oftener, and much more firmly, in cases of disobedience, wanton mischief, or cruelty; a well-authenticated instance of "harrying a bird's-nest," or ill-treating *any* living thing, was so punished as to be a warning to the other scholars as well as to the offender.

"Big Murray's" powers, or rather want of powers, were considered by the master, and he seldom got any "palmies" for his poorly-said lessons. Unfortunately, however, he had by some means got a pipe and some tobacco, which he brought with him, and took two or three puffs in the school, just before Mr. Torrance entered for the afternoon's work.

"Who has been smoking here?" said Mr. Torrance in an angry voice, as he made for the desk, and took out the "big taws," seldom produced excepting on "capital offence" occasions; they were about two feet long, of thick leather, and had four tongues, half an inch broad, with burnt, hard tips. There was no reply, as no scholar was ever forward to "tell on" another. Indeed, "tale-pyet" was a hated name, and

had a doggerel rhyme applied to it more graphic than polite.

"Whoever has been smoking here, let him stand up," said the teacher in a determined tone.

The eyes of the scholars were directed to "Big Murray," and his miserable, miserable face betrayed him, although he whined out, "It wasna me. I'll never do't again."

"Come here this instant, James Murray," were Mr. Torrance's peremptory orders; and they were obeyed, but *very* slowly.

"Give me the pipe, sir," said Mr. Torrance; which Murray did, and it was in the fireplace, and into fifty bits within a second. Mr. Torrance then spoke to the school *through* Murray about the "dirty habit of smoking," the stupidity of boys trying to smoke, "as if it made them men," and, turning to Murray, "the impertinence of daring to use tobacco in the school." Jamie's eyes were all the time fixed on the taws, and a more wretched-looking boy could hardly be imagined.

"Hold out your hand, Murray," said Mr. Torrance.

Murray began to cry, and blurted out in a whining tone, "It'll be sair," all the time keeping his hand close to his side. Murray's innocent and too true utterance made the scholars laugh. Even the master himself smiled as he said,—

"Yes, it will be sore, but sorer if you do not instantly hold out your hand."

Murray held it out timidly, half-way, and "higher," "higher yet," from the master, added very little to its elevation. Down came the taws, hot and stinging.

"It's awfu' sair! it's awfu' sair! it's most awfu' sair!" howled Murray piteously.

"Hold it up again, instantly," was hardly literally carried out, but the taws again swept down on his palm, and was followed by a roaring out of all proportion to the pain inflicted; for many a boy had endured half a dozen such strokes, and, although a tear might start, no sound would proceed from the lips.

Evidently Murray expected that roaring would modify the sentence, but he had to take a third, followed by so much unnecessary howling of "Eh, maister, maister, it's awfu' sair, it's maist awfu' sair," that Mr. Torrance said if he was not quieter, he would give him other three. This quickly sobered Murray, for his hands were hard although his heart was soft, and he was ordered to his seat, to which he slunk, whilst the boys said, "He's a saft tattie;" "He's a muckle calf,"—words which happily only schoolboys use and understand. Murray's hands were cool in a few minutes, but for weeks thereafter his eyes never

were off the master, and his tasks worse rendered than before, which is saying a great deal.

This was, however, a rare occurrence in the school, and Murray's punishment on this occasion was partly an arrear, justly due to him for putting ink on the tail of "Fairy," Mr. Torrance's little spaniel dog. Fairy! Fairy! how many of us recall your puffy figure, your silken hair, piebald with pure white and rich auburn. What a good kind friend you proved! Pranks we played, as boys will play, and, had Mr. Torrance caught us at them, we would have "caught it,"—but you, good dog, always preceded him, and the babel of noise was hushed by the appearance of your brown and white nose, so that when your master followed we were PROPRIETY itself. Quiet be thy rest, Fairy! or, if thou art merely transported to Fairyland, and still a thing of life, come and be the good Fairy of the merry boys and girls that would have given thee the best of their "piece," had you not been so delicately fed by Mrs. Torrance that you "sniffed" even at biscuits.

Saturday at Blinkbonny school was a half holiday, but an exacting review of the week's work made the forenoon a busy one. The higher classes repeated their week's tasks to the master or the helper; thereafter, those who had gone through these well

were rewarded by being entrusted, each with one of the lower classes, with which they went over the past week's lessons; and all were as fond of the work as it was good for both,—for it kept fresh in the "monitors'" minds their former books, and the explanations or assistance given by them, being from recent and hard-earned experience, proved very useful to the scholars.

The more advanced girls generally took the classes in the "wee schule;" although not infrequently the second highest classes were assigned to them on Saturdays, and resolutely did they insist on and exact good behaviour, as well as correctly-said lessons; for Mr. Torrance early taught the boys gallantry by precept, and, that failing, by "the rod," if a girl monitor had occasion to report anything savouring of disrespect on the part of scholars under her care. For in these days girls and boys were found in all the classes. Keenly were the battles for the Dux-ship fought between the sexes, and neither established a sustained supremacy.

From nine till half-past twelve on Saturdays the school was as busy as an ant's nest; thereafter, the well-won half holiday was entered upon with a helter-skelter romp, and a sudden "set to" to any games that were *in* at the time.

"Composition," or "writing essays," as we called it, was occasionally practised. Some of the productions were elaborate and creditable; others were very poor. Big Murray, however, tabled a unique, and, as far as it went, very complete essay on the horse. It was the following line:—

"A horse is a horse, and it eats grass."

Tammie Cooper's on the clock was rather more artistic: "A clock is for keeping time if it's rowed up, and it is called a wag-at-the-wa', and they're dear, and they strike, and it has a face and two hands, and figures on them like chapters, and Captain Frenchie's says 'Cook-coo;'" referring to a French prisoner who lived in the village and who had a "cuckoo" clock.

Even poetry was invited, and doggerel enough some of it was. Willie Rankine, in his description of the beauties of the Blinkie Burn, had the following graphic lines:—

"The sun gets up in the mornin',
And round the world he flies;
The birds begin to whistle,
And the vegetables to arise.
The trouts jump at the flees,
An' the coos gang down to drinkie
In the pool where our jucks soom,
In the mill damhead of Blinkie," etc.

Yet some folks said that he had copied from a south country poet a part of the first verse.

To those who know the beauty of the wild cherry tree (called the "geen" or "gheeng" tree), when covered with its white blossom, Bob Taylor's following couplet has merit :—

> "Wi' hawthorn and wi' geeng trees deckit,
> As if a monarch were expeckit."

There was an occasional excursion of the elder boys to the summit of Dunsarg under the guidance of the helper, who explained the various places and objects seen from its summit. The physical geography of the district was the subject of an essay thereafter, and some tricky boys had stuffed Tom Crease's head with nonsense, as they sat together on the cairn of stones which crowned the hill, for Tom's essay contained the following startling account of that enormous hill, measuring round its base ten miles, and standing fully two thousand feet above the sea :—

"Dunsarg consists of a heap of stones, and everybody that goes up the hill has to carry up a stone. This was the way that the hill was begun, and this is the way that it will be brought to perfection."

Tom had a lisp, and, as his essay was read aloud, my readers can imagine the diversion caused by hearing him read, with a strong voice and in perfect sincerity, "Duntharg con-thitht-th of a heap of th-tone-th," etc.

The examinations were great occasions, especially the August one, when the prizes and the vacations were given; the spring examination was almost private, being conducted by the Presbytery of Blinkbonny, and had special reference to religious teaching. But the August examination was the event of the year. The school got an extra clean up and some evergreen decorations for it. For months before it, specimens of "elegant penmanship," elaborate facsimiles of large and many-lettered maps, etc., were prepared; the workers at these coming very early in the morning, and often remaining till daylight failed them.

Every scholar turned out clean and neat, many of them well dressed; the girls in white with blue sashes, and the boys with a flower in their coats; and, because they were thoroughly prepared for their work, they were blythe, frank, and fearless. The examinators were generally the clergymen of the district and some of the heritors; occasionally Sir John M'Lelland presided. The examination was thorough: there was no "cramming" of special lessons beforehand, the work of the year was described, and any part, from the first to the last page, could be chosen by the examinator. When the selected page was turned up the scholars went at it fearlessly, some-

times furiously, especially in arithmetic. It was a rattling "tick, tick,—*score*—tick, tick, tick—*score*—done," a process of very speedy execution, and generally correct. Questions of any kind within the lines of the studies were asked, and well answered. Presentation of prizes, announcement of the vacations, and complimentary speeches to masters and scholars closed the SCHOOL part of the proceedings.

But what would the present generation, with its "Blue Ribbon Armies," "Bands of Hope," "Juvenile Abstainers," and other temperance societies, think of a heritor asking all the boys to come to the "Beltane Inn" (where the examinators, heritors, masters, and friends of the school dined after the day's work), and giving each boy a glass of sherry negus to drink the master's health? On one occasion, indeed, this heritor gave the boys one pound sterling, to divide equally amongst themselves; their numbers were about sixty, so that the share of each was fourpence.

Noisy but hearty was the crowd that clustered round the "treasurer," who had "changed" the pound, —literally, he had asked and got "a pound's worth of coppers." Sudden was the dart to "Pie-Davie's," who always baked a large stock of "hot mutton-pies" on village occasions; soon was the stock in the "shop" cleared. Down the vennel to the "bakehouse"

rushed the boys, but even there very few were "ready." Davie Walker, however, had already begun to make a further supply. "Come back to the shop in about an hour," said he, "an' ye'll a' get plenty pies; I have the 'lids' an' the 'shells' ready for fillin', an' the meat's a' cut, an' some's in the oven the noo." The pie-mob darted about at all sorts of games for the hour, and returned with such absorbing power that "Pie-Davie" was again cleaned out.

"If Maister Malcolm had only tell'd me," said he, "that he was gaun to gie you laddies a pound for naething, I wud a' haen as mony pies as ye could buy, but pies canna be made in the clap o' a hand." Some of the forenoon's baking which he had called in from other customers disappeared with marvellous speed, for they were coldish; but the new batch were piping hot, and well filled with gravy. An artist on the look-out for a humorous sketch could have found it here. The boys leaned forward to escape the overflowing gravy, as they did not wish to lose the savoury fluid; the pies had to be changed from hand to hand to lessen the tingling sense of heat. Big Murray rashly attacked one, and it made him writhe, and whirl the bite on his tongue in order to expose it to the cold air, for, while sorely tempted to reject the tasty morsel, he managed to retain it,

although it forced tears from his eyes. He had, however, the sense or instinct to lay the just-broken-on pie on a window-sill until it was cold enough; when that was the case it very quickly disappeared.

I could not at this distance of time enter minutely into the subject of the games of my schoolboy days; very likely these are still played; but cricket and games requiring expensive equipments were unknown. Indeed, the expense of providing bats, wickets, balls, etc., not to mention the fancy-coloured vandyked caps used by "Junior Clubs" nowadays, placed such amusements far out of our reach, and the idea of asking subscriptions for such objects was undreamed of, and would have been scorned by the boys as well as fruitless in result.

I cannot even trust myself to recall the "seasons" of the games, or who arranged the times for each; I think that Lucky Baxter's little shop window, and especially some baskets and "cappies" in the under part of it, ruled this matter; for when these were filled with leather-covered balls it was through the village in an hour that it was the "ba' noo." Great was the variety of games played with the ball, both by boys and girls, from "Shintie" and "Hails" to "Stot-ba'" and the "bannets." But I can neither render into English the names nor the games themselves, so I

will merely give a few well-remembered words, leaving my readers to guess their meanings or pass them over.

"Marbles," or "the bools," was entirely a boys' game, from the Ring, Winnie, or Funny, with its hail-butt and half-butt, and nae shovin', and nickledeed, and "reistin' by your nickle set," to "Stappie," "The Shore," and other varieties. The bools were of various sorts and values: those played with were called "taas," and consisted of "marbles, stanies, frenchies, moral-leggers, doggles, breakers," etc., while those played *at* were generally called "stookies." The boys had also the "peeries," and the "taps," and the "buttons," and the "paips" (played with cherry stones), etc. etc., while many of their games needed little but swift limbs and good lungs: such as "Tig," "Cross Tig," "The Rounders," "Prisoners' Relief," "Foot an' a half," "Cuddy loup," and "Tallyho the hounds." The "lassies' games" were skipping on the "jumpin'-rope," the "House Ba'," the "pickies" (or the "beds," or the "Pall-all"), played with a flat stone on the pavement, and the "Chucks," played with pebbles or stones; but their favourites seemed to be a romp at tig, and a game in which, hand to hand, they swung round, singing merrily,

"Here we go round by jing-go ring,
And down by Mary Matanzy,"

—varied by

"Here's a poor widow from Babylon,
Six poor children all alone,"

and "Through the needle-e'e, boys."

In winter the ice on the "Damhead" had its few skaters, but its shoals of sliders, crying, "Clear the road!" "Keep the puddin' het!" falling in heaps, scrambling out, and up and at it again. There were also "snaw-ba' bickers;" but as these are in every village, I must not further tax the reader's patience on the subject, for schoolboy and schoolgirl life is much the same to-day as it was sixty years ago.

The appliances in the matter of books, maps, and illustrations of our modern system are far in advance of the old one. Schoolrooms are larger, better fitted, lighted, and aired; industrial, musical, and other departments are universal; teachers are better paid and better trained. He would be a rash man who dared assert that "the former days were better than these," and would need to "inquire wisely concerning this."

And oh! ye modern teachers, find a site for a monument of gratitude to the inventor of steel pens. For, sixty years ago, the mending of the "quills" was a bothersome, provoking business, all the more so that wild thoughtless boys and even tricky girls split or

spoiled the pen to annoy the master, and it required, besides a sharp knife and a good eye, a good temper, and more leisure than old teachers had, to "make," so as to suit boys whose "fingers were all thumbs," a passable writing implement out of

> "The grey goose quill,
> Torn from thy parent bird to form a pen,
> That mighty instrument of little men."

Where are now the merry boys and sprightly girls that were scholars at Blinkbonny in my young days, and how have they sped? Some have held high positions in the army and navy, and have fallen in their country's cause; some have risen to eminence at home, and still adorn the pulpit, the bench, the bar, and the council board. Many have had a distinguished career in foreign lands, and still survive to guide the councils and shape the destinies of the largest dependencies of Britain. All over the world they are—or were—to be found, in professional, mercantile, and industrial life: statesmen, judges, merchants, planters, settlers. Sad this "or were," for

> "Their graves are scattered far and wide
> By mount, and stream, and sea."

Many still remain in Strathbonny, and their children frequent with noisy glee the haunts of their

forefathers, and learn and romp as they did; and many sleep with kindred dust. May the sunny memories of "Auld Langsyne" warm the hearts of those survivors who read these long-past bits from the annals of the schools of Blinkbonny.

"WHEN WE WERE AT THE SCHULE.

AIR—'*There's nae luck about the house.*'

"THE laddies plague me for a sang,
I e'en maun play the fule,
I'll sing them ane about the days
When we were at the schule.
Though now the frosty pow is seen
Whaur ance waved gowden hair;
An' mony a blithesome heart is cauld
Sin' first we sported there.
When we were at the schule, my frien',
When we were at the schule;
An' O sae merry pranks we play'd
When we were at the schule.

"Yet muckle Jock is to the fore,
That used our lugs to pu',
An' Rob, the pest, an' Sugar Pouch,
An' canny Davie Dow.
O do ye mind the maister's hat,
Sae auld, sae bare, an' brown,
We carried to the burnie's side,
An' sent it soomin' down.—*Chorus.*

"We thocht how clever a' was plann'd,
When, whatna voice was that?
A head is raised aboon the hedge,—
'I'll thank you for my hat!'
O weel I mind our hingin' lugs,—
Our het an' tinglin' paws,—
O weel I mind his awfu' look,
An' weel I mind his taws!—*Chorus.*

"O do you mind the countin' time,
How watchfu' he has lain,
To catch us steal frae ithers' slates,
An' jot it on our ain?
An' how we fear'd at writin' hour
His glunches an' his glooms,
How mony times a day he said,
Our fingers a' were thooms?—*Chorus.*

"I'll ne'er forget the day ye stood,
'Twas manfu', like yoursel',
An' took the pawmies an' the shame
To save wee Johnny Bell;
The maister found it out belyve,
He took ye on his knee,
An' as he gazed into your face,
The tear was in his e'e.—*Chorus.*

"But mind ye, lad, yon afternoon
How fleet ye skipp'd awa',
For ye had crack'd auld Jenny's pane
When playin' at the ba'.
Nae pennies had we: Jenny grat;—
It cut us to the core;
Ye took your mither's hen at night,
An' left it at her door.—*Chorus.*

"An' sic a steer as granny made,
When tale-py't Jamie Rae
We dookit roarin' at the pump,
Syne row'd him down the brae.
But how the very maister leuch
When leein' saddler Wat
Cam' in an threep't that cripple Tam
Had chased an' kill'd his cat.—*Chorus.*

"Ah, laddies, ye may wink awa'!
Truth maunna aye be tauld,
I fear the schules o' modern days
Are just siclike's the auld.
An' arena we but laddies yet,
An' get the name o' men?
How sweet at ane's fireside to live
The happy days again!
When we were at the schule, my frien',
When we were at the schule,
An' fling the snawba's ower again
We flang when at the schule."

—*Thomas C. Latti.*

CHAPTER III.

"HOME AFFAIRS."

"I carena for Tory—I carena for Whig,
I mindna your Radical raver a fig:
But gie me the man that is staunch as a stab,
For the rights o' his *caste* like blythe Jamie M'Nab."
A. Rodger.

GEORGE LOCKHART'S income from teaching, even when the school was well attended and the fees paid with fair regularity, was too small to maintain himself, his wife, and his family, which consisted of two girls and two boys, and to make ends meet he exercised the vocation of a barber.

This required, in George's phrase, some organization. Everything did this with him, for, while he had a good stock of high-sounding words, none were so frequently used by him as, organize, organized, and organization. His barbership must not interfere with his teaching, and as the "schoolroom" became for the time being the "shop," this set George to organize a minute and thoughtful system comprehending his charges as well as his hours of labour, both of which

were variable; but, luckily for himself, on one point he was immovable—viz. that all barber work was to be paid for in "ready money," and to any doubtful customer in advance.

George's dwelling-house adjoined the school. In the garden which lay behind these stood a wooden pump with a wooden handle of primitive design, and the "clinkum-jankum" proceeding from the bucket and it, when water was being drawn, was considerable. The water issued by a leaden spout with a bevelled mouth, but there was also a small hole in the top, so that it was considered a feat to lean over the old half barrel that received the falling waste water, close the leaden mouth, drink out of the "wee holie," and get to the perpendicular again without the "spout water wettin' ye a'." Not a few children actually fell into the half barrel; some were even "kilted" into it when drinking, although there was, attached by a bit of clothes-rope to the well, a rusted tankard for general use and safety.

The nearness of this water, and the necessity of cleanliness in a barber, made George not only shave himself daily (a rare occurrence then with men much above him in social position) and keep his person neat and his hair well brushed, but it also required that his wife and children should keep the school as clean as

the rough floor, windows, and furniture would permit; and this they did.

He discouraged barber work before school hours, and his "organization" for this was an extra charge of a penny for morning hair-cutting; few came in the morning, excepting boys from the country attending the parish school. He was always ready for work at eight o'clock, and his uniform "cut" for all boys was as near the skin as the comb would permit him to go, excepting a fringe which he left in front rather under an inch long, so that when his work was over, there was no fear of anybody "ruggin'" that hair for some time, as no one could grip it, so close was the "cowe."

His own scholars had to "adverteese" him in the forenoon, if they wished their hair cut, and pay the penny for which he performed on them; they had also to go during the dinner-hour to the "trough," which stood on a stone near the well, and wash their heads well; a heather "range" was provided as a scrubber, but it was seldom used, as there was also an old stocking for this purpose, and a potato bag served as a towel. As soon as the school was dismissed, the scholar was barbered, and the school carefully swept, dusted, and aired.

Mondays and Thursdays were his "organized" hair-

cutting nights for adults; and he used either a bowl or an old helmet to guide him in keeping the line, so that the finished work was as square as a hunting horse's tail all round the head, or had a fancy curve at the back, according as the helmet or the bowl was preferred; for there was no "shedding" of hair at the back in those days; all hung flat, square, and stiff.

He had a few trade jokes; his favourite on hair-cutting was about a man whose hair was completely matted, and who only got it cut twice a year. The barber had recommended him to comb, or rather "redd" it every day. "No' very likely," was the reply; "it's only redd every six months, and then it's like to rive a' the hair out o' my head; if I was reddin't every day, I wadna hae a hair left at the month's end."

Saturday was, however, George's great day, and he "organized" so as to do either shaving or hair-cutting from two till five o'clock; and thereafter only shaving from six o'clock onwards. Besides the bit of "cannel," or "splint," or "licht" coal that spluttered and crackled in the fire, he had two candles stuck in old brown ink-bottles placed on the desk, which had been put about the centre of the school, and, while George was shaving his customers on the fireside of the house, a

weekly newspaper was read by some one from the desk, or a keen discussion carried on, generally upon political subjects.

Another part of George's organization was that he would shave nobody who had not a "clean face," referring especially to masons or tradesmen, who were likely to have sand or other matter that would blunt his razor, and he thus explained the wherefore:

"Not long after I started this shaving business a mason was the first that came in to be shaved, one Saturday. I was proud of my razor that day; it was new, and sharp, and keen; but the very first scrape made it like a *saw*. I've taken good care not to let that happen again, for be he smith, miller, baker, plasterer, ploughman, or sweep, he must go to the trough and take the 'road metal' off his chin before I try to take off the hair; but I finished the mason with the same razor, although he grunted an' growled a good deal before I was done, but I told him *it was a' his ain wyte.*"

He fell into rather a more awkward scrape with the old minister of the parish, who sent for him during an illness, but I will let him tell the story himself.

"I never was more careful in sharpening a razor,—it was just perfection,—and I laid it on the mantel-

piece in the school to be sure to know it again. Some of the boys, when I was out, had taken it to sharpen their slate-pencil, or 'skeelie,' as they call it, unknown to me. Mr. Harkness (that was our old minister's name) wanted me to use his razor; but I asked him as a special favour to allow me to operate with my own; for it was perfectly clean and in splendid order. I began with a flourish, but lo and behold! the minister roared, 'Preserve me, George, that's liker a "risp" than a razor!' and I felt he was right. I never was so much affronted—never—never all my life. He would not believe me when I assured him that some person had spoiled my razor unknown to me; and I lost his custom ever after that."

His favourite shaving story was the old one about Aiken Drum, who had been sadly bothered by his wife using for sundry purposes—or rather abusing—his razors; so much so, that whenever she saw him grin she took the first word of "flyting." One day, when his growl was more sudden than usual, and actually profane, she said, "Ye're girnin' for naething the nicht, Aiken; at least, instead o' blaming me, ye should thank me that it's nae waur. Davie had fa'en in wi' some oysters, an' he took the first thing that came to his hand to open them wi', an' that was your razor. Luckily I catched him at the third ane, an' if ye

girn at that, what would it a' been if he had opened them a' ?"

"Just fancy," said George, laughing heartily, "any person attempting to shave himself with a razor that had opened three oysters. Ha ! ha ! ha ! the idea is utterly ridiculous—perfectly preposterous !"

In the stirring times before the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832, George's "shop" on Saturday evenings was the rendezvous or howff of the village. Occasionally a newspaper was read and discussed, but the price of newspapers prevented the "club" buying even a "weekly," and any chance one was welcome.

A friend had sent my father a copy of *The Edinburgh Evening Post and Scottish Literary Gazette*, "published every Saturday night after the arrival of the London Mail, price 7d," etc., bearing date 10th Sept. 1831. It contained an account of the coronation of William IV. and Queen Adelaide, and of the illuminations and rejoicings on that occasion; as well as a debate on the Reform Bill, etc. George Marr, a joiner, was working in our house at the time; he was a strong Tory, a veritable Conservative working man, and, as many of the sentiments in the newspaper delighted him, he, with my father's consent, arranged that I should go to Lockhart's on

Saturday, 17th September, and be "reader" of the *Post* that evening.

George Marr was seldom at Lockhart's, for the company was generally too radical for him, but it was often the only chance he had of getting at what was in the newspapers; and, knowing what was to be read, he took care to acquaint Thomas Baillie, the Radical candlemaker, Kennedy, the Whig tailor, and others, of the bill of fare for Saturday, with the result of overcrowding George's shop to such an extent that it impeded his movements, and, being himself anxious to hear the news, he proposed, if it was agreeable to his customers (there were more listeners than customers, however), that "they should organize themselves into a reading-club till nine o'clock, and that Master Robert should read aloud from the public prints."

This was carried by acclamation; and I append a few *bonâ fide* extracts, in the belief that these will not prove uninteresting, although over fifty years old. Certainly the audience appreciated the contents of the newspaper, although some of those present were rather given to interruption, interjection, and, within moderate limits, discussion, as will be seen by the following bits in italics.

The entire newspaper (now before me as I write)

would barely equal a single sheet of our modern journals, and not a little of it was taken up with literary reviews, advertisements, etc., so that the more interesting parts were easily read within the three hours. And, when I halted for a rest, the remarks were plain and pithy; but I will try to curtail both extracts and comments.

In the coronation news occurred the following passages :—

"*London, Thursday Evening, September 8th, 1831.*

"At length, then, the crown has been placed upon the heads of William and Adelaide. The ceremony was most imposing, although so economically got up." (*"That's to see yet," said Kennedy the tailor; "we'll be taxed plenty for't, nae doubt."*)

"It was very grand. The cheering along the whole line was deafening. This being also the Jews' New Year's Day, the Hebrews had an opportunity of 'killing two birds with one stone,' it being a holiday with them at any rate." (*"The swindling ruffians," said Thomas Baillie the candlemaker.*)

"Among the company at the Abbey were the Duke of Wellington in his robes, but his servants were in mourning" (*"Would that be for King George IV. that's dead?" said Strachan Gemmell*), "the Marchioness of

Londonderry, most elegantly attired." (*"No doubt," came from George Lockhart.*) "The Duke and Duchess of Richmond arrived in the same carriage." (*"What for no' ?" from several.*) "Her Grace wore a profusion of valuable pearls." (*"Umph !"*)

"His Majesty sat bareheaded" (*"Mair fule he," from Baillie*), "with a high ruff round his neck, and appeared remarkably well. Her Majesty sat by his side, but rather higher, and wore a crown of pearls. As the carriages passed, the bands played 'God save the King.'" (*"Grand," all round.*)

"Amongst the personages who attracted most attention on his entrance was Prince Talleyrand. There was a general movement of curiosity as he proceeded along the choir." (*"Nae wonder ; I would have liked to see him," said George Marr the joiner,—"the great French churchman, statesman, and ambassador."*) "The following is the order in which the different parts of the ceremony were conducted after the procession had arrived at the Abbey :—The recognition, the offering, the oath, the anointing, the investing with the super tunica" (*"What's that ?" "Whisht ; wait till we hear it a',"* etc.), the spurs, the sword, offering of the sword, the investing with the mantle, the orb, the ring, the sceptre, the crowning, the Holy Bible, the enthronization, the homage.

"Then followed the anointing and enthroning the queen; the holy sacrament concluded these imposing ceremonials."

"Would you be kind enough," said George Marr, "to read the parts of the ceremony over again, Mr. Robert, slowly?" which I did.

To say that a sharp discussion followed is to give but a faint idea of the Babel, and I will not attempt to reproduce *it*. It was quickly cut short by George Lockhart saying: "Let Mr. Robert read about the illuminations, and the other contents of the newspapers, and do not interrupt him, for it's not the opinions of Blinkbonny people we wish, but the real, absolute news printed in the papers. Please begin with the opening leading article, and read on, Mr. Robert, if you please."

"Quite right, George;" "Thank you, George;" "Well spoken, George;" "High time;" "Please go on, Mr. Robert," came from as many different throats.

The first article was on the Reform Bill, and called forth a few growls; it ended with,—"The Bill, therefore, standing upon its own merits, must and shall be thrown out of the House of Lords" (*whereat there was a loud groan*).

The next "leader" was about "the line of policy which the Reformers seemed to intend to pursue. They are evidently doing all in their power to excite

the rabble to the old work of petitioning. We will soon hear of meetings in all parts of the country, to convey the sense of the 'mob' to the House of Lords, in order to prevent, as far as lies in their power, that freedom of debate for which the Upper House ought to be so eminently distinguished. For ourselves, we are fully persuaded that the people of Scotland will not allow themselves to be played upon, will not rise at the bidding of a set of imbecile and unprincipled men." (*"The impertinent blackguard!" growled James Baillie. "Quite right!" shouted George Marr. "Silence, every one," came from George Lockhart.*)

Then followed some remarks on the coronation, but they fell flat compared with a short paragraph that followed. "The ministers intend to raise a pretty numerous squad of personages, high and low, good, bad, and indifferent, to the peerage, but it is to be remarked that they are all Reformers and Radicals." (*Hisses from George Marr. "Quite right," from James Baillie.*)

The next article met with universal approval. "There cannot be a doubt that there are too many statutes of a sanguinary nature allowed to disgrace English justice, which ought to be immediately repealed, and secondary punishment substituted . . .

The time is now arrived to purge the statute-books of these bloody spots."

And sad it is now to know that capital punishment has been inflicted within the memory of many living persons for secondary crimes,—sheep-stealing, robbery, fraud, breach of trust, and occasionally for trifling offences.

The Parliamentary news would not fill two columns of the *Scotsman* of our day. The proceedings of the House of Lords on Thursday, September 1, are disposed of in one line:—"Nothing of any importance was done."

And those of September 2 were not important, excepting that it may be interesting to give the names of the speakers:—Lord Chancellor Brougham, Lord Ellenborough, Viscount Goderich, Lord Plunkett, Earl Grey, the Duke of Wellington, who "rendered his speech remarkable by his strong condemnation of the conduct of the French with regard to Portugal," Lord Melbourne, the Duke of Sussex, etc.

In the report of the proceedings of the House of Commons for September 1, Sir C. Forbes presented a petition from "the Hindoos, Parsees, and Mahometans (*sic*), natives of the East Indies, and inhabitants of the island (*sic*) of Bombay, praying that all His Majesty's

subjects, being natives of India, should be declared eligible to serve on grand juries, . . . and that they might be allowed to act as justices of the peace in conjunction with British magistrates." *The petition was ordered to be printed.*

Mr. Hume was inclined to move "that that part of the report which required that the members of that House should go in livery to the coronation should be omitted." (*Oh! oh!*)

Sir C. Wetherell said that "the gallant member should not only wear his bagwig and sword, but he should also go with his spurs on." (*A laugh.*)

In the discussion on the Reform Bill occur the names of Lord Althorp, Lord John Russell, Mr. Croker, etc.

Mr. Pringle presented a petition from the Noblemen and Commissioners of Supply in the county of Selkirk, praying that the county be united with the county of Peebles.

Mr. Ferguson gave notice of motion, "that the number of Scotch counties should not be diminished."

Mr. Cochrane presented a petition from the county of Elgin, praying that that county be not encumbered with any part of the county of Nairn.

The illuminations of Edinburgh are described as

principally "by variegated lamps, but by far the most brilliant displays were in those places where *gas* was used." There is also reference in Parliament by Colonel Sibthorp to the dangers of steam navigation, an advertisement of the "sailings of the *United Kingdom* steamship betwixt Leith and London, calling off Scarboro', the most splendid steamship at present in Europe."

The following quaint notice of a marriage occurs :—

"At Glasgow, on Tuesday last, James Mactear, Esq., Surgeon, late of the Island of Tobago, to Miss Margaret Lay.

> "Nature composed a Lay so well
> That sad Mac-tear a victim fell,
> And, charmed by its finished wiles,
> He now dispenses nought but smiles."

Amongst the "Deaths" are found :—

"At his house, in Exeter, on the 16th ultimo, Colonel John Macdonald, son of the celebrated Flora Macdonald, aged 72."

"In Killarney, Lieutenant-Colonel M'Carthy, late of the 96th, and formerly of the Irish Brigade. He was the first Catholic officer in the British service promoted to the rank of Colonel."

Lord Brougham and the Court of Chancery, Dr. Chalmers and the Poor Laws, are discussed, and

there is a sprinkling of foreign news, local news, accidents, incidents, etc.

A page and a half is taken up with *Literary Reviews.* Amongst others, that of the *Literary Museum* commences: "This is a monthly periodical, and the price of each number is only sixpence. A monthly periodical for sixpence! We can scarcely go wrong in paying sixpence a month for a periodical, whatever be its merits. But the *Literary Museum* is positively a bargain," etc. What would the reviewer think of the penny monthlies of 1884?

Advertisements occupy a page and a half of the eight pages. These were merely skimmed over. "Oldridge's Balm of Columbia" called forth a tirade from George Lockhart on quacks and perfumery generally.

"Balm of Columbia! Balm of Fiddlesticks! IT cause whiskers and eyebrows to grow? keep the hair from turning grey? make it curl beautifully at the first application? stop it from falling off? Stuff and nonsense! Cold water and good brushing are worth all the balms and hair oils in the world. Stuff and nonsense! Robbery and imposition! If anything's good, almond oil is; but at the best the natural sap is the thing. Plague on their lying quackery."

But I am forgetting that my subject is Bits from

Blinkbonny, not bits out of old newspapers read more than fifty years ago in Blinkbonny; and, although the quotations are genuine, I fear they will be thought excessive and tedious. I will therefore, in next chapter, stay more "amongst my own people," or rather, relate their discussion of a subject that came nearer home to them than either the Coronation or the Reform Bill; namely, the threatened introduction of lighting by gas into the village.

Indeed, the mention of gas having been used in Edinburgh during the illumination seemed to cast the other contents of the *Post* into the shade, for it was followed by strong expressions of disapprobation, and would have been the subject of fiery discussion had time permitted; but George Lockhart had a good deal of shaving work before him, and he broke up the meeting by abruptly saying,—

"Good folks, I must get my customers attended to, so I propose that we accord a most hearty vote of thanks to our young friend, Mr. Robert Martin, for his elocutionary kindness upon this occasion, and we will be happy to be favoured with his presence in time to come, although I would not like to disturb the organization of my business by making my customers wait, as they have had to do this evening; and I hope they will all excuse me."

A vote of thanks to Mr. Lockhart was then very cordially given; but by this time he was making up his lather, and he nodded his "Thank you, gentlemen," at the same time that he soaped Strachan Gemmell's chin, and fell to work thereon, while the "reading" club was dispersing.

George's last customer was Dan Corbett—a waif reputed to be a poacher—who slipped in to be shaved after all others had gone. Dan paid George in kind by bringing him dead weasels, squirrels, or birds, which George stuffed for sale; also feathers for "buskin" fly hooks. And so successfully did he ply his avocations of schoolmaster, barber, birdstuffer, and fishing-tackle maker, that he became proprietor of his house and school, and, to his great delight, a voter at the first election after the passing of "The Reform Bill."

CHAPTER IV.

THE GAS QUESTION.

"Thus saith the preacher, 'Nought beneath the sun
Is new.' Yet still from change to change we run;
What varied wonders tempt us as we pass:
The cowpox—tractors—galvanism and gas."—*Byron.*

THE adjourned discussion on the subject of lighting by gas in general, and of the propriety and safety of its being introduced into Blinkbonny in particular, came off earlier than some of us expected—for it occurred at the carrier's quarters on the Thursday night immediately following the meeting at George Lockhart's described in the last chapter.

One of the "events" of each week in the village was the arrival of the Edinburgh carrier, which took place with wonderful regularity about seven o'clock every Thursday evening. His quarters were in the Laigh Road, a name given to that part of the village which lay on the south—nearest the Blinkie Burn; this was the seat of the principal industries of the village, such as they were. On the north side of the

Laigh Road proper were the brewery, the candle-work, the millwright's shop, the "cooper's," the blacksmith's, the "roperie," and the "spinnin' mill." On the south, between the road and the mill-dam, was a grassy common used as a bleaching-green, a rope-spinner's walk, a place for storing uncut timber, by the cooper, the millwright, etc., which the boys seemed to think had been laid there for them to practise all kinds of gymnastics; for quoit-playing, putting the stone, and a variety of other purposes.

The quarters of Jamie Dunbar, the carrier, adjoined Benjie Cranstoun's cooperage, or, to use the Scotch expression, "marched wi' the capper's;" and there was a weekly gathering of folks from the village and from the surrounding country at the carrier's on Thursday evenings, for he did all the small carrying trade of the district, and many came to get their expected parcels; while not a few came to hear the latest news, as Jamie Dunbar was the most regular channel of communication within their reach, between the great world and little Blinkbonny.

The trunks of the capper's trees served for seats, and the company was rather more select than that which met at George Lockhart's, for the somewhat singular reason that many of them shaved themselves; and if there were two Houses of Parliament in Blink-

bonny, the carrier's was the House of Lords, and Lockhart's the House of Commons.

My errand on the night I write of was to get plans and specifications for the proposed gaswork, which my father, who was one of the promoters of the scheme, expected to receive from Edinburgh by the carrier.

The Laigh Road Parliament had already met, and the capper, George Marr, and Kennedy the tailor sat on the trunk of one tree, and opposite them Strachan Gemmell, Thomas Baillie, and Nicol Fairbairn the saddler were seated on another.

The greetings I received from the three first-named were characteristic of the men. The capper bobbed his Kilmarnock nightcap and his head at the same time quickly, and said nothing. George Marr slightly raised his cap, made a neat slow bow forwards, said it was a pleasant evening, and, pointing to the log from which he had risen, asked if I would take a seat, such as it was. Kennedy wagged his head from side to side quickly and angularly once, and, looking up, said, "D'ye think we're gaun to hae a shower, Robert?"

These greetings were not exceptionally accorded to me; they were the regular expressions of courtesy used by each man, and, unconsciously to themselves they were the outcome of their natures and training

Much is often revealed, and much may be inferred, from such trifling incidents as the capper's "bob," the joiner's neat bow, and the tailor's familiar wag.

Kennedy broke into the subject at once. "Here's Robert, here, he'll likely ken about this gas business." Then, looking towards me, he said, "Can you explain about this new kind o' licht they ca' gas, that your father an' a wheen o' his kind o' folk's that keen to bring in amang us? You'll hae seen 't, nae doobt, when ye was about Edinburgh way at the vaecans" (vacations). "George here," said he, nodding to the joiner, "says it's an awfu' dangerous thing, wi' a maist abominable smell, baith where it's made an' where it fuffs out, if it's no' lichtit in a moment. Could ye tell us about it? What div ye really think about it yersel'?"

"I have not only seen it," replied I, "but my uncle in Edinburgh has it in every room in his house; it's a beautiful, clear, steady light; one jet of it gives more light than a dozen candles; you can turn the tap until it is like a mere bead of light, and it will remain *in* as long as you like; in fact, in a moment, by merely turning the tap, you can have what light you wish, from a dozen of candles to a mere peep."

"Div ye tell me that? it canna be canny. Div ye need to snuff 't?" said the astonished tailor, taking

at the same time a pinch of "beggar's brown" snuff out of his old tin box; then, holding out his box, "no' that kind o' snuff, but snuffers for a can'le, like what the 'quality' uses. I aye snuff ours wi' my fingers;" and the blackness of his forefinger and thumb corroborated his statement, as he held them out, saying, "They're gey hard, and if ye do 't sharpish it doesna burn you."

"Snuff 't? snuff gas?" said I, laughing heartily at the idea. "No, not at all; there's nothing to snuff about it. It is led through the house in a small pipe; a brass bracket, soldered to this pipe, is screwed to the wall or mantelpiece at one end, and there is a small tap at the other, just like a water-tap, only, because gas is light, the mouth of the tap is uppermost, like the fountain in Sir John M'Lellan's lawn."

"Does 't flee up like pouther the minute the licht comes near 't?" asked the perplexed tailor.

"In a twinkling—instantly."

"But if the licht was to gang back the inside o' the pipe, it would blaw up the town."

"It cannot get back for the pressure, and, even if it could, gas will not burn unless it gets abundance of common air, any more than a fire will without air, or rather oxygen," was my reply.

'You're surely speaking nonsense now, Mr. Robert,"

said Nicol Fairbairn, "for just look at a pair o' smith's bellises. The air maun get in before it can get oot, an' they tell me that the gas is red hot at the MAKIN' end o' 't; in fact, Jamie Dunbar has seen the concern they make it in, and he declares that it was *white* hot, just like a burnin' fiery furnace seven times heated. And I canna see but that when ye licht it at the ither end, say, for instance, in a house, the whole gas has 'but' to explode frae end to end o' the whole concern, an' blaw up like a pouther magazine. It's a sign o' the wickedness o' the present day, that Parliament allows ony sic dangerous stuff to be made at all, far less be brought in pipes under the very public road and into folk's very houses. As it was in the days o' Noah, so it is in our time: 'The earth is filled with violence through them'; it's a sinful tempting of Providence. Some day we'll have a regular Vesuvius in Blinkbonny, and be a' blawn to bits. It's a black burnin' shame! The inventors of such evil things would have been stoned to death under the Jewish economy."

Nicol was a staunch adherent of the "Auld Licht Antiburgher Church," and walked four miles every Sabbath to Broomhill, that being the nearest congregation of that excellent "body." His religious views, even to excessively minute details, were pro-

nounced and rigid; indeed, he was known as "The Old Economy."

During the previous discussion, George Marr's fine Roman face was becoming stern, his nostrils dilated, his eye keen, his mouth firmly set, and occasionally "Um, um," sounded from far down his throat. When Nicol had ceased speaking, George said,—

"That's not even the worst of it, Nicholas. The thing has undoubtedly been introduced and regularly used in hundreds of places for many years past without such accidents happening. What distresses me most about it is, that it will utterly ruin our country. Let but gas come into common use, then—farewell for ever, *all* Britain's greatness!"

"However can you make that out, George?" said I.

"Easily, Mr. Robert," was his reply; "easily. Everybody knows that the navy is the secret of our country's safety, and therefore of her greatness. Everybody knows that our navy is recruited from the hardy sailors that navigate the whaling vessels, that fish in the northern seas. If gas comes to be used, oil will not be required; whale-fishing will cease; our navy will go down for lack of trained, hardy men; the French 'Monsure' and the Spanish Armada will pounce upon Britain, and introduce Popery and tyranny, and then—farewell, Britain's greatness!"

"You're quite richt there, George," said Nicol Fairbairn, whom the word Popery always affected powerfully; "I never thocht on that. Ye canna contradic' that, Maister Robert; in fac', it's just ringin' the bell for Popery to come in. It's worse than Jeroboam's calves under the old economy."

"I canna just see the thing in that licht," said Thomas Baillie, the candlemaker's head man, for even oil was an opposition element in his trade. "The navy can get mair men if the whale-fisheries disna need them, or they can get callants an' train them; an', forbye, a' the oil that they can fetch hame will be a' needed for the new kinds o' machinery that's comin' oot in a' trades every day."

"But it will be so cheap," said George Marr, "that it will not pay for the risk and expense of bringing it here. I wonder to hear *you* above everybody, Thomas, —you, a candlemaker, speak that way, for if gas becomes the light of the future, candlemaking is done for. But there's more than that. It will ruin lairds, farmers, and agriculture. If no candles are used, who will ever feed fat cattle? Nobody will buy the tallow. In fact, I can hardly trust myself to speak on the subject. It's worse than the Gunpowder Plot. Take my word for it, if gas comes into general use, this country's done,—ay, done before it knows where it is."

"That's undeniable," said Nicol Fairbairn. "Gas, to my mind, is clearly an invention of Satan, one of the 'many inventions' that he gets wicked men to make, to their own ruin and the ruin of all connected with them."

"That has been said about every new thing," said Thomas Baillie, "and often about things that hae turned out great blessin's. There, just look at Eben Baxter's, the millwright's, owre there. He mak's fanners for dichtin' corn, an' weel they dae't, an' clean they make it. Weel, when fanners was first introduced, there was a great hullabaloo about them, an' even kirk-sessions dealt wi' farmers for usin' them,—'cleanin' their corn wi' the devil's wind,' as they ca'd it. Naebody thinks that noo. An'," turning to George Marr, he added, "I'm no' the least feared for gas, George. Wha's gaun to licht their house wi' a pipe fixed to the wa', or even screwed on till the mantelpiece, where they whiles dinna need licht, an' that they canna carry to the press, or the coalhouse, or pit on their table, if need be? Besides, gas is poison—rank poison; it's the same kind o' thing that often poisons the poor colliers doon the pits, an' if a bairn was to turn on the tap that Maister Robert speaks o', it wad either poison the whole hypothec, or blaw them up, or maybe baith. Na, na, George, I'm no'

feared for gas pittin' doon can'le. Can'le will be can'le when a' their spunkie 'Will o' the Wisp' gases, for a' the noise they make about them the noo, is clean forgotten, like the pee-oys we used to make wi' pouther langsyne on the King's Birthday,—a fizz, an' a fizz, an' a fizz, an' by wi't."

Strachan Gemmell had been an attentive listener, but had hitherto said nothing. "They tell me," began he, "that this gas is made o' coal,—maistly o' splint coal,—an' that it takes a lot o' lime to make it clean, an' that there's an awfu' black, bad-smelling stuff like tar comes frae 't that's fair poison to the trouts in a water if it gets intill 't."

"That's the case," said George Marr. "I've been in the Edinburgh Gaswork; and your nose would have led you to it half a mile away. That's another mischief that gas will do, Strachan; it will make coals so dear that no working man will be able to buy them. And what with the gas, and the new steam-engines and steamboats that are becoming so common, the supply of coal in our country will soon be exhausted, and then—oh dear! dear! we're driving headlong to ruin."

"It's terrible! it's fearful! it's alarming!" jerked out the capper; and each face grew dark as he was speaking, when luckily the carrier's cart turned the

corner of the Laigh Road, and broke up the dismal meeting by turning the attention of each man to his expected parcel.

Thomas Baillie threw some comforting oil on the troubled waters, and brought a smile into each face by saying, as he rose, "I'll away an' get my bundles o' weeks (wicks) frae Jamie Dunbar, an' mak' can'le o' every ane o' them; and he can bring me a cart-load o' them if he likes. I'll mak' can'le o' them a', an' sell them tae, an' mak' mair; I'm no feared for their gas, an' I needna be; can'le will gang oot o' fashion when claes gangs oot, so keep up your heart, Strachan, an' you tae, Kennedy; we'll fend yet, 'at will we."

James Dunbar was a hearty, well-built man of middle height, about fifty years of age, black-aviced, shrewd, and outspoken. His cart was followed by a small crowd, many of whom were boys. These received noisy attentions from his large, shaggy, curly dog "Gruffie," whose furious tugging must have added not a little to the power that the horse had to exert, for they were pulling in contrary directions.

Scarcely had his cart halted in the "yard" before he was assailed with various questions on different subjects; for, while taking "Copenhagen," his sturdy well-fed grey horse, out of the cart, he was asked,—

"Have ye onything for me?" "Did ye fa' in wi' yon, James?" "What's the news frae Edinburgh?" and many others, to all of which he merely said, "Bide a wee, we'll put ye a' richt the noo."

As soon as Copenhagen was free, he found the road to his stable and stall, where Willie Dunbar had preceded him; he was soon stripped of his harness, wiped down with a noisy hiss-ss-ss, and while munching his comforting oats, he was cosily "bedded" for the night.

For small parcels, and to occasional or "anterin'" customers, James was a ready-money man. These he carried in a box which was the first part of the load that was handed down, after the hoddin' grey-drab felt covering was removed. Mrs. Dunbar generally took care of this box, and not infrequently fixed the charges for its contents, which, when paid, were handed to the waiters-on, who thereafter disappeared quickly.

I expected that the parcel containing the gas plans would be in this box, and followed it into the carrier's kitchen. It was a busy scene. Annie Rankine, the sister of Willie Rankine, Big Murray's monitor at school, was first served, as she had come about three miles from the country to get Willie's clothes, for he was now apprenticed to a plumber in Edinburgh.

"Here's your bundle, Annie; it's aye tapmost," said Mrs. Dunbar, taking out a round-shaped bundle tied in a blue cotton handkerchief, with two crumpled paper labels roughly stitched on it, that had done service for several journeys. The one ran, "Adam Rankine, Gibbiesbrae, Blinkbonny;" the other, "William Rankine, Mrs. Dinwoodie's, Number 19 Patterraw, Edinburgh;" and both labels bore "to be called for."

Annie handed Mrs. Dunbar a bit of paper which she had kept in her hand closely stuffed under her armpit, containing threepence. This was given and taken with a "thank you" quietly spoken by both, for the bundle was carried at half-price. When Annie reached the door, she hung about the cart until the carrier observed her, which he did so quickly that he seemed to have been looking out for her.

"Eh, Annie!" said he; "Willie convoyed me twa miles oot o' the toon. I never saw him lookin' better. He's gettin' on fine, an' he likes the plumberin'; he's makin' your mother some kind o' whigmaleerie thing for toastin' bread wi'. Rin awa' hame, like a gude lassie, afore it's dark, an' tell your mother that I was speerin' for her, an' that Willie's fine."

Annie's face glowed with delight; she hardly took time to finish, "I'll be back wi' Willie's claes on Monday nicht," before she was off like a hare to

Gibbiesbrae. There the steepin' tub stood ready to receive them, and early next morning they were on the bleaching-green or the ropes, as the different articles required. Monday night saw them rebundled in a much more shapely way than they had been received (possibly because some solid home-baked scones and bannocks made the parcel stiffer) and handed to the carrier to take to "Edinbury to oor Willie."

Willie Rankine was the eldest of the seven children of Adam Rankine, the ploughman at Gibbiesbrae. His quick parts had attracted the notice of a master plumber who had been employed in executing extensive repairs on Dunsarg House, the residence of Lord Dunsarg; and he had offered to take Willie as an apprentice. It was with no little difficulty that his parents got the laddie rigged out for Edinburgh; the washing *bill* had never entered into their calculations, and, small as the amount may appear to richer folks, a month's experience revealed that the washing must be done at home, or done without, and therefore the bundle came monthly to his mother.

But I am forgetting that I left the carrier unloading his cart and surrounded by expectants of parcels. The gas plans were in the "under boot," a box in the bottom of the cart reserved for the more valuable and best-paying parcels and those requiring special

ADAM RANKINE'S

protection from rain. When this was opened, George Marr asked the carrier if he had got the "Geelum" for him,—a plane used by joiners for making square "checks," the steel of which is as wide as the sole, and is inserted at an angle across it, not square, as the "irons" of planes generally lie, but "squintin-dicular."

"I've gotten't, George," replied the carrier. "It's in the low boot, but for the life o' me, I couldna mind the outlandish name o't. So I said to the shopkeeper, 'Our joiner out-bye tell't me to bring him a plane wi' the queerest name, maist, ever I heard; I canna mind it, an' I couldna say't; but he showed me ane. It's braider than my thoomb, an' the "airn" o't gangs a' the way across the bottom—no' like a common plane, but squint-ways;' an' I gied my mouth a thraw" (at the same time twisting his under-jaw as far to the right as it would go) "an' said that it was like that."

This raised a general laugh, in which the carrier heartily joined, and, producing the plane, he said, "The shopkeeper laughed as hearty as ye're doin', an' said it'll be a—what did ye ca't the noo? a squeelum? Ony way he gied me that, an' I paid half-a-crown for't; an' ye'll need to gie me a groat at least—'deed ye should gie me a saxpence for gettin't an' fetchin't,

for the name o't was bummin' through my head a' the road in, but I never could catch't."

The plane was exactly what George wanted, and the three shillings were frankly paid. Twopence, however, was pleasantly handed back by the carrier to George, with "I was jokin' about the saxpence, fourpence is plenty. But what is the name again, George?"

"I believe," said George, "that really it is 'Guillaume,' and that that is the French for 'William,' for they say that it was a Frenchman that invented the plane. It goes in Scotland, at any rate, by the name of 'Geelum.'"

"Oh, I see! if ye had said that it was like 'Weelum' written wi' a G, I could hae minded the name better," said the carrier, "but wha ever could mind 'Geelum'?" And George, with a respectful "Thank you, James," and "Good-night, gentlemen," walked off with the "Geelum" under his arm.

Kennedy was not so easily settled with. Carriers in these days often paid for the goods and produced the receipt. Jamie Dunbar had handed Kennedy the merchant's discharged account, and laid out the parcel.

"The claith's awfu' dear, James, and the thread's ridic'lus," grumbled the tailor.

"Dear or no dear," said the carrier sharply, "it's

what you ordered, an' out o' the shop you said; for I left the line, an' ca'd to pay't after; so here wi' the money, an' sixpence for carriage, an' dinna hinder ither folk, or the ne'er anither parcel I'll bring for ye. Find fau't wi' yer merchant if you like, but keep yer tongue aff me."

Kennedy's leather bag was produced, and the price laid down on Jamie's broad hand. The carrier's face had a playfully disdainful smile on it. Kennedy's was gloomy and greedy.

Thomas Baillie got his bundle of wicks, and was off to the east side of the Laigh Road. I got my gas plans, and Kennedy, Strachan Gemmell, and I walked to the front street of the village together. Kennedy's head seemed so confused by "the awfu' dearness o' claith the noo," and the coming destruction of Blinkbonny by gas, that he said little. Strachan's parcel had not come, and he consoled himself by saying, "'Deed, I hardly expected it," which was very likely, for the carrier's, on Thursday, was a great attraction for him. As we parted Strachan said,—

"Is it a positeeve fact yon that ye were tellin' aboot the gas? It must be a most terrible dangerous thing. It beats my comprehension, however in a' the world your father would encourage such diabolical inventions. I'm feared to speak to Tibbie about it.

We canna bide in Blinkbonny to be blawn to bits. But she's gaun to be washin' the morn at Mr. Spowart the gauger's, an' he's been in a heap o' pairts o' the world, an' I'll tell her to ask him, for he's sure to ken a' about it, an' to hae seen 't."

I did not succeed in allaying Strachan's fears, although I tried to do so, for as we parted he said, with a deep sigh, "It's a bad look-out for us a'—bad—bad—fearfu' bad," and went to unbosom his fears to his faithful, sensible Tibbie.

What came of this interview, and of the proposed gas company, must be reserved for the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER V.

BIG MURRAY.

"He was a gash and faithful tyke
As ever lap a sheugh or dyke,
His honest, sonsie, baws'nt face
Aye gat him friends in ilka place;
His breast was white, his touzie back
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black."—*Burns.*

STRACHAN GEMMELL, on his return home, lost no time in communicating to Tibbie, with added horrors out of his own terror-stricken head, the fearful destruction that gas was bringing on Britain generally, and was likely to bring before long on Blinkbonny. While he was repeating what George Marr and others had said about it, Tibbie looked at him with an amused, inquiring glance, for the dismal tale did not even excite, much less frighten her.

"They've been jokin' wi' ye, Strachan," said she.

"Jokin', Tibbie!" said he, as if he felt insulted,—"jokin'! na, Tibbie, na, it's nae jokin' matter; it's sober earnest, mair's the pity. I wonder that Sir John, and Mr. Martin, and folk like them would countenance sic diabolical inventions."

"Strachan, ma man," said Tibbie kindly, "if Sir John, an' Mr. Martin, an' men like them tak's adae wi't, be sure that they'll no bring sic fearfu' mischief to their ain doors as ye hae been describin'; they'll look weel afore they loup far."

"Ane wad think sae; ane wad hope sae, onyway," said Strachan, a little relieved. "Arena ye gaun to wash at Mr. Spowart's the morn, Tibbie?" She nodded assent. "Weel, he'll hae seen gas mony a time, for I think he's been every place, an' seen everything. If ye hae a chance o' speakin' to him without bein' ill-bred or forritsome, ask him if he thinks that it's safe to put gas-pipes into the streets o' Blinkbonny. *There's ae thing*, it'll never come into ma house, but ye can ask him about takin't into houses tae."

"He aye takes his smoke in the afternoon about five o'clock," replied Tibbie. "Come up as if ye was comin' for me, and you'll mair than likely get a crack wi' himsel', for I dinna understand onything about gas, as ye ca'd, an' I couldna bring hame a richt story, even if he tell't me ane about sic a ferlie."

Strachan's two daughters seemed alarmed by the catalogue of horrors that he had strung together about gas, but Tibbie's cheerful words put them quite at ease. The two children that Tibbie had presented Strachan with, called respectively Strachan and Tibbie,

lay sound asleep in the box-bed, but Big Murray had drunk in the doleful predictions, and, being accustomed to look up to Strachan as his father and guide, he got no comfort from his mother's sensible coolness on the subject. His mind was a chamber of horrors, in which explosions were scattering Blinkbonny and its inhabitants over the Strath.

But what has Big Murray been about since we left him eating the pie on the examination day? He remained at school until he was nearly thirteen years of age. He was no scholar even then. His head was too much taken up with birds, and squirrels, and "bees' bykes," and animal life of all sorts, to leave any room for lessons. Moreover, Tibbie, taking the time consumed, rather than the progress made, as her standard, maintained "that eight years' schulin' was plenty for ony puir body's bairn; afterhend that, they should begin to learn to work for themselves." Jamie accordingly gave over attending the school, and found a more congenial occupation in running errands for Hugh Wallace the butcher, and assisting in the slaughter-house.

Hugh's temper was not of the best, Jamie's uptake of messages and instructions was provokingly slow, and, in the execution of not a few of them, he committed stupid blunders. Many a cuff and many a

stroke he got with more disagreeable things than Mr. Torrance's taws. Hugh had more than once threatened to "do for him" with his big knife, and had ostentatiously sharpened it with his steel, eyeing Jamie furiously the while, and running at him. The poor boy trembled, for he believed that the butcher would actually kill him.

One day Jamie, while in the act of putting a bullock's heart on a hook that hung by the door, swung it so awkwardly that it struck Mrs. Spowart smartly on the face as she entered the shop. Jamie was peremptorily ordered to go into the back room, after having a string of unsavoury epithets hurled at him. After Mrs. Spowart had completed her marketing, and had left, the butcher entered the back shop with his large knife in his hand. I would not care to record what fell from his tongue, but he seized the unresisting and paralyzed Jamie by the neck, bent back his head, and, putting the blunt back of his knife to his throat, he drew it quickly along so as to heat it uncomfortably. Jamie uttered a heart-rending groan. "Moffat," the butcher's dog, entering the shop at the time, heard the groan. He howled and barked furiously, threw himself against the door so violently that the butcher opened it, and tried to scowl or kick him into quietness; but Moffat sprang

in between Jamie and the butcher, wagged his tail towards Jamie,—for they were great friends,—but growled savagely at his master.

This insubordination of the dog made Wallace furious, and he seized a huge cudgel with which to beat him. The dog showed fight, and his whole bearing was so determinedly warlike that the butcher withdrew, partly in fear, partly out of respect for the big handsome collie, for he was a "*nonsuch*" in his line. "Get out o' this," said he to Murray, "you hopeless blockhead, and never darken my door." Jamie, nothing loth, obeyed, but Moffat, assuming the post of bodyguard, followed him closely, eyeing Wallace and guarding Jamie. The butcher called the dog back, used endearing names, and offered him choice bits of meat. Even Jamie ordered him to "be off," but Moffat would not go. Jamie accordingly only went to the opposite side of the street. Moffat occasionally left Jamie's side, crossed to the butcher's door, barked furiously, ran round in a small circle like a hyena in a cage, his neck, mane, and tail being on end, more like those of a wolf than a dog, and delivered a final growl inside the door, before coming back to Jamie.

All Jamie's efforts to get the dog to leave him were as fruitless as Wallace's coaxing had been. "Bring

him back wi ye, you born blockhead, an' see an' behave yoursel' better," at length came from Wallace in a gruff voice. Jamie obeyed. Moffat followed him, quiet but watchful, and kept near him all day. Thereafter Moffat was more esteemed and better used by his master than he had ever been, and the relationships between them had a certain etiquette of "mutual rights-ship" about them which saved his dogship from a repetition of many indignities that, up to his championing of Jamie, had been submitted to as a matter of course.

Big Murray never had much spirit about him; he was a shrinking, cowardly boy, and the state of terror into which he was not infrequently thrown by the bullocks with large horns, which he had often to drive, was known only to himself. Moffat, however, was as fearless as Murray was timid, and the dog was Murray's fast friend and constant chum. Murray implicitly trusted Moffat, Moffat followed and readily obeyed Murray. Even more, he liked him, and showed this in the various noisy and familiar ways whereby dogs relieve their warm hearts, and, as Murray had met with little demonstrative kindness from any other quarter all his life, he the more warmly appreciated Moffat's attachment.

Murray exercised a singular influence over the dogs

that ran loose about Blinkbonny. He had a knack of whistling on his fingers in a shrill, yet strangely modulated tone, that drew them about him. I have seen Nancie's Knowe, in reply to his whistle, become like a hunting-field of promiscuous dogs in a few minutes, and in illustration of this, one incident of his school-days seems deserving of special notice.

A little black-eyed Italian boy, after playing through part of Blinkbonny on an instrument which we boys called a "French fiddle," had sat down on the pavement at Luckie Baxter's window, in the bright glare of the sun. The sky that day was cloudless, quite an Italian sky, and possibly the wee laddie was having a waking dream of home.

It was Saturday, and Big Murray had been a gaping listener to the music for nearly an hour. His restless gaze had wandered from the boy's black eyes to the wonderful box, with as much astonishment as Shon M'Nab's, of whom the rhyme says,—

> "An' when she turned ta corner round,
> Ta black man tere she see, man,
> Pe grund ta music in ta kist,
> And sell him for pawpee, man;
> And aye she'll grund, and grund, and grund,
> And turn her mill about, man,
> Pe strange! she will put nothing in,
> Yet aye teuk music out, man."

Murray's eye had also travelled beseechingly to

every window and door on both sides of the street, begging eloquently for a copper to the little foreigner, and twice his face had glowed with delight as he had been made the bearer of a halfpenny to the "funny wee pouchie" of tarnished velvet, and as tarnished embroidery, that hung by the boy's side. When the boy sat down to rest, Murray sat down beside him and tried to speak to him, but the one knew nothing of Scotch, and the other was fully as ignorant of Italian, so that the interview was mostly a dumb show.

A sudden thought seemed to strike Murray, for he rose up and said to the boy, "Bide you there, an' I'll rin to ma mither's an' see if she'll gie me a piece to gie you." How much of this the boy understood I cannot tell. Tibbie Murray was not in such a hurry to comply with Jamie's request as he was to urge it.

"A what-dae-ye-say?" said she. "A wee black laddie wi' a box tied round his neck wi' a belt, an' he rows a handle like rowing up a clock, an' music comes out o't? He'll be a foreigner, nae doubt, an' we hae enough o' our ain to feed."

"Oh, mother! gie me a piece for him," urged Jamie; "he's a wee laddie, an' there's naebody wi' him, and I dinna ken a word he says. He'll maybe no' ken what to ask for at the baker's, an' he'll hae his nicht's lodgin's to pay for, nae doobt."

Jamie succeeded beyond his expectation, for his mother cut up a home-baked scone, spread a little treacle on it, and said, "Gie him that, an' wait an' I'll gie you a bit tae;" but Jamie's hospitality was greater than his appetite, for he merely said, "I'll get mine after," and was off to his new friend, who had by this time recommenced his musical work, and was playing before Draper Renwick's door.

Draper Renwick was a gruff, pompous, fiery man. The first jingle of the music brought him from the back of the counter to the door, the under and wooden half of which was shut—the upper half was made of glass and open. He angrily shook a cloth-yard measure which he held in his hand, at the little stranger, and was ordering him roughly to "Get out of that, double quick!" when Jamie arrived with the scone.

The little Italian bowed, and grinned, and smiled, evidently hoping to soften the fiery heart of the angry draper, and played on.

Renwick had returned to the back of the counter, and his eyes were glaring through the window at the boy, whose white teeth and black eyes were pleading in vain—or rather, they had a sinister effect upon Renwick. He waved his hand angrily, still the boy played and smiled. He shook his fist threateningly, still the boy persevered. At length Renwick darted

round the counter; we onlooking boys heard him calling for "Tearem," a rough Bridlington terrier which he had, and most of us retreated to a safe distance, for Tearem was a dangerous customer.

The angry draper had grasped the handle of his door; we heard Tearem barking furiously behind him, and trembled for the result, when Big Murray stepped in between the Italian boy and Draper Renwick and said, "Ye've nae business to set the dowg on onybody—let-a-be a wee laddie."

"I've what?" shrieked Renwick. "How dare you, you—you ragamuffin you"—

What might have occurred I cannot tell, but to the delight of us boys, Mr. Morrison, the Secession minister, turned Luckie Baxter's corner, and walked up the street on the opposite side of Renwick's shop. Quickly did the draper disappear and busy himself in the back of the shop. Graphically did the boys explain what had occurred; pleased were they when Mr. Morrison crossed the street and gave Murray and the Italian a penny each; curious were they when they heard Mr. Morrison and the boy converse for a short time in Italian; and proud were we all, when we saw Big Murray give both the penny and the scone to the "stranger within our gates," as Mr. Morrison had called him.

The story, eagerly carried by the boys, spread quickly through the town. Draper Renwick was an ill-liked man, and deservedly so. The rebuff that he had got greatly increased the number of coppers that the wee strolling musician gathered in Blinkbonny that day; and when he started for Larkton, the county town of the district, a good many boys convoyed him to the Filliesbridge, and, after they had parted with him, they cheered him, and followed him with their eyes till he was lost to sight. Big Murray mounted on the parapet of the bridge to try to get another look, but the boy was "off and away."

Murray was the hero of the hour; as we came back he actually was called James by one boy.

"Were ye no' feared for Tearem, Jamie?" was the first question put to him.

"No' very—no' for ord'nar," was the reply. "I was feareder for Renwick. Tearem kens me. I yince gied him a hurchin to eat—that's what some folk ca' a hedgehog."

"A hedgehog, Jamie?—a hedgehog? He couldna eat a hedgehog; it would jag his tongue."

"Oh, I didna gie him the skin o't. George Lockhart wanted a hedgehog to stuff for somebody, an' he askit me if I could get him yin. I kent where there were some, and after ye get off the skin, the flesh is

bonny an' white, like a soo's; the hedgehog's nose is like a soo's, an' George says they're the same kind o' beast. Tearem was wi' me that day, an' didna he snap it up. Tearem kens my whistle yet."

So did most of the dogs about Blinkbonny, for Big Murray was seldom without some running after him; and possibly Moffat, the butcher's dog, and he had been old friends before they became fellow-servants.

Shortly after the scene between the butcher and the dog, Murray committed another mistake, indirectly concerning Mrs. Spowart again, which, whether he was entirely to blame or not, produced his dismissal from Wallace's.

"Tak' a' thae heads to the smiddy an' get them singit first; then tak' the calf's head to Spowart's, and bring the sheep's anes here," were the master's orders.

The sheep's heads and the calf's head were in one basket,—a calf's head was a new thing to Jamie,—and he left all with the smith, with instructions to have them singed, and he would come back for them; but to do the calf's head first, for he had to take it to Spowart's.

The singeing of a sheep's head is peculiar, I believe, to Scotch cookery, and is done by the blacksmith, partly on the fire, partly by a rod of red-hot iron; the object being to take all the woolly hair off, without

burning or at all scorching the skin. The process is sometimes called "singin'," and many a Sunday dinner in Blinkbonny consisted of a "singit" sheep's head and trotters. Glorious broth it made, dotted with "blue pat peas," turbid with barley brae, and accompanied by a bit of a pease bannock; a snuff o' the "singe" in it was not objectionable, and the head and trotters went "far," in housekeeping phrase, backed up as they were with turnips, carrots, and roasted potatoes. "We've seen the day."

"Singe a calf's head?" said Archie Dawson, the smith,—"singe a *calf's* head? Ye're wrang there, my man; I never either did that, or heard o' ony ither body doin't."

"The maister telt me that I was to take a' thae heads to the smiddy to get them singit first; then I was to take the calf's head to Spowart's."

"Spowart's?" said the smith. "There's nae accountin' for what thae English folk'll eat; a calf's head is for ord'nar plottit, but if ye say this ane's to be singit I'll do it, but mind dinna blame me. So here goes!" and a sharpened poker was driven into the nose, and the head singed in a few minutes.

Big Murray meantime had gone to get his bite,—it could hardly be called a dinner,—and he was back in the smithy as soon as the calf's head was cold enough

to carry. He took it to Mrs. Spowart's, and, finding the kitchen door open, laid it on the floor, cried, "Here's yer calf's head!" heard the answer, "All right; just leave it," and was back at the smithy for the sheep's heads, which he brought to the shop.

He had not been long there before Mrs. Spowart's servant, carrying a queer-looking brown paper parcel, and accompanied by Mrs. Spowart herself, entered the shop, which smelt strongly of the late arrival of the sheep's heads.

"The very same smell!" said Mrs. Spowart sniffingly. Then confronting the butcher she said angrily, "Whatever do you mean, Mr. Wallace, by sending me such a calf's head?"

"I never sent a better to anybody," said Wallace firmly. "What's the matter with it?"

"The matter, Mr. Wallace?—the matter? It has been burned to a cinder;" and, pointing to the sheep's heads, "If an accident had occurred to it such as these have had,—for the calf's head has precisely that smell, and is as black as these,—you should not have sent it."

It dawned upon Wallace "that that big blockhead Murray had"—but the opening of the brown paper parcel converted dawn into day, for there was the calf's head blackened with soot, and redolent of singed hair.

"This is more than mortal can stand!" said the furious butcher, storming at Murray. "You monstrous idiot, you—you"—for, despite Mrs. Spowart's presence, his tongue was uncontrollable, "whatever put it into your fozy skull to gang an' get the calf's head singed?"

"You telt me to get a' the heads in the basket singit *first*, an' then to tak' the calf's head to"—but here he was interrupted by the perspiring, "comflusticated" butcher, who shrieked,—

"Get out o' my sicht if ye respect your life!" and as Murray disappeared, he flung the calf's head after him, saying, "There's mair sense in that dead calf's head than in yours, ye dooble docus."

Big Murray was better received at home than he expected. His wages had been small, his work constant and dirty; when going for cattle, or to markets, he was often out all night. His clothing was often sorely torn by the butcher's victims, and as he had to repair them himself, he soon came to use the needle so well, and Strachan's business was increasing so rapidly, that Murray became an apprentice to his stepfather.

Moleskin and corduroy were the materials out of which the clothes of the tailor's humbler customers were made, and it was some time before Murray's

greasy fingers could force the needle through the stiff double seams. For the first week he had sorely pricked fingers, much to his own discomfort, as well as to the staining of the garments he was working at, and, as if the sore fingers were not punishment enough, his cheeks and ears tingled with the stroke of the tailor's palm; but a month at the trade convinced Strachan that "he could mak' a tailor o' him yet," and as Jamie had no ideas above "workin' at onything," he became a constant and servile workman.

His recreations were in the way of his business too, being errand-going—certainly not errand-running, for a bird's nest riveted him, and every living thing, from the trouts leaping in the burn, to a fox-hunt, induced him to stand and stare; and although he knew that loitering meant a cuffing, he gratified his love of animated nature at the expense of his smarting cheeks and humbled spirit, for Strachan's discipline was suddenly exercised on Jamie's ears, with a "take *that* on the right, and *that* on the left, and *that* for daidlin' when ye're sent on an eerant."

But to return to the gas question. Strachan found Mr. Spowart in his garden, smoking a long clay pipe called a "churchwarden," and he did not need to ask for Tibbie, as was originally arranged, for the hearty

Englishman cried, "Hallo, tailor, come and sit here a bit."

Strachan was "much obleeged till him," and very shortly after he had sat down he asked the exciseman if he knew anything about gas, and if he had seen it used in towns, and houses, and if it was *safe*.

"Seen gas used? hundreds of places, thousands of times," said Mr. Spowart. "I only wish we had it here. It's a beautiful light, safe as the bank, cheap and cleanly; not like a greasy, oily, filthy-smelling lamp, messing everything; not like a candle, with its blinking little niggers growing taller and uglier inside of the flame, and needing to be beheaded; no streams of tallow flowing down both candle and candlestick; no suffocation from the burning mess of paper, wick, tallow, and splutter when the candle is burning its last; no loss, no mess, no bother; lighted in a moment; put high, middling, or low in a jiffey. You may leave it burning for a year, and find it exactly the same at the year's end, excepting, of course, the paying for it. It's a splendid invention."

"But tell me this, sir, if you please," asked Strachan: "is it not ill for explodin'?"

"It can't explode; indeed, it can't burn without air. I've seen a large new gasholder full of it tested for tightness. The man would pass a lighted torch

along every joint; if there was the slightest leak, it was on flame at once, and he knocked it out with his cap. The iron of the holder was not above the thickness of a penny, and even if it had been possible to get a lighted torch *inside* the gasholder when it was *full* of gas, the gas would put *out* the torch, but there would be no explosion."

"That's against all reason and common sense," said Strachan; "it's impossible, utterly impossible; look at pouther."

"Powder isn't like gas at all," said Mr. Spowart; "but come down to the kitchen and I'll make some before your face."

"Are ye quite sure we'll be safe?" said the perplexed and fearful tailor as they entered the kitchen.

"Safe? safe? my life is as precious to me as yours is to you;" and Mr. Spowart put some splint coal in the bowl of a "churchwarden" tobacco pipe, covered it with clay, and put it in the fire.

Strachan looked on in curiosity and fear, keeping as near the door as he could. Soon smoke began to issue from the mouth of the pipe. When Mr. Spowart was putting the light to this smoke, Gemmell held his hands on his ears and "joukit doon," but not hearing any explosion he opened his eyes, and, seeing the little jet of flame at the mouth of the pipe, said timidly,

"Is that gas?" for he still expected to hear an explosion when "the light went back the pipe;" but it went quietly out, when tar began to appear; and although Strachan gave a slight shudder when Mr. Spowart took the pipe out of the fire with the tongs, his fears were allayed, and he said,—

"I'm no just sae feared for gas as I was."

He was proceeding to thank Mr. Spowart before leaving, when the exciseman, who had received a small keg of oysters by the carrier, asked Strachan if he would have one or two.

"I've never seen nane," said Strachan.

"There they are on that there board," said Mr. Spowart; "and beauties—beauties," as he rattled them about.

"They're awfu' hard-like, they're like stanes. Do you eat them like that?" and he lifted an unshelled one and tried to bite it, greatly to Mr. Spowart's amusement.

"They're shell-fish, they are, tailor—the shell isn't for eating," said Mr. Spowart; and, taking a short knife, he opened one, and, showing the oyster proper to Gemmell, said, "That's what you eat; with a drop of vinegar and a sniff of pepper on them they're delicious. Try that one."

Gemmell's *look* of disgust is indescribable. "Eat

that!" said he. "Feugh — it's awfu' ugly — it's scunnerin'; the sicht o't 's enough to sicken onybody."

"Ugly! sicken!" said Mr. Spowart; "well, well, I'm sorry for you; but if you really won't have it, here goes;" and the savoury bivalve disappeared, saluted by a loud smack of the tongue.

Strachan could hardly repress an exclamation of disgust, and an expression concerning Mr. Spowart which would have been very offensive; and when he saw another disappear into the exciseman's mouth, he felt such internal stomachic discomfort, that, seizing the two long pipes which he had received wherein to try the gas experiment at home, he bade Mr. Spowart a hurried "Good-night, an' thank ye," made a hasty retreat, felt sick, or "a' groosin'," as he called it, and on the way home kept saying, "Yon's awfu'! it just beats a' the ugly things to eat that ever I saw. Ugh, ugh!" etc.

Tibbie was persuaded to try one of the oysters. Mrs. Spowart recommended it as a cure for heart-burn, from which she was suffering. She eyed the morsel with the same mingled feelings as her husband had done, but, looking upon it as a medicine, she plucked up courage and put it in her mouth. In a second she was bent nearly double, and with her hand firmly pressed on her throat she staggered out at the

kitchen door as if under the influence of a severe and necessary emetic; every few steps she halted and bent forward under spasmodic rocking pain; the movements of her "ringle ee" were alarming, for it seemed to start out of its socket; and all the way home her sensations of discomfort returned, fully as much to the amusement as to the alarm of the beholders. Sick and sore she entered her house, dropped into the nearest chair, and kept saying, "Oh, Strachan, Strachan, Strachan! Oh, Strachan, Strachan, Strachan! Oh, Strachan, Strachan, Strachan! Oh, but I am a sair woman!"

The tailor was alarmed at first, but he quickly guessed that the oysters were at the bottom of the affair, and said, "Tibbie, did ye really pit a thing like yon intil yer mooth? The sicht o't, na, the very thocht o't, fair hearts me yet."

Jamie was despatched for some whisky, for Strachan did not keep "a bottle." A glass of spirits helped to revive both, but it required a good sleep too, for neither of them could taste supper; and when dainty dishes were referred to before them, the "oyster scene" came up to their mind's eye, and drew forth expressions of which "nastiest, sickeninest, abom'nablest" are the mildest—the others being too strong for even these outspoken "Bits."

Strachan repeated at his own fireside the tobacco pipe gas-making experiment successfully, to the edification and wonder of a great many of the sceptics in Blinkbonny, and he began to "believe in gas" sooner than some of the middle-class folks in the village did; for travelling was rare, expensive, and dangerous in those days. Many of the promoters had never seen gas used, and were very doubtful about having anything to do with it.

Old Mr. Taylor said "He would take shares because he could trust to the reports of those who had seen it and tried it; but for all that, it was a leap in the dark, and the gaswork should be as far away from the place as possible; and particular care would need to be taken not to let any light get near the 'gasholder,' or Blinkbonny would be blawn over the face o' a' the country like snawflakes in a storm."

Draper Renwick confirmed some waverers by saying, in his pompous way, "Such fears are utterly groundless—utterly. I come into contact with gas when I go to the markets; I can buy goods by its light as well as by daylight. I have done so repeatedly—repeatedly," etc.

The result was that a Gas Company was formed, and, in course of time, a gaswork was erected in Blinkbonny.

CHAPTER VI.

MARKETS AND FAIRS.

"Oh, dear! what can the matter be?
Jockey bides lang at the fair."

THE weekly market held in Blinkbonny in my young days was largely attended by farmers and artisans from the surrounding district, as well as by merchants, and, indeed, persons of all sorts. The market-place proper was enclosed within high walls, and, with the exception of a light projecting shed-roof carried round part of the sides and the entrance end, it was open to the sky, and paved with rough burn causeway. More people were generally found in the open street than in the market-place, and, if the truth must be told, nearly all the business was finished up in the inns, taverns,—"change-houses," as they were called,—or in the grocers' back parlours, for there was no law then against such traffic.

Blinkbonny market had its "Tam o' Shanters," and there were too many "Souter Johnnies," ready to sit

"Boosin' at the nappy,
An' gettin' fou an' unco happy,"

for almost every bargain was settled "over a gill." Sad havoc this custom made of many a home in the village and in the district, so sad that I will not dwell much on it. There were "giants in those days" in the matter of being able to "carry" enormous quantities of whisky toddy, and yet get home "in the saddle," over rough dark roads, thanks, probably, to the better sense of the horse than the rider.

Often did the noisy glee of cronies breaking up at

"Some wee, sma' hour ayont the twal"

disturb the street, and the clatter of their horses' hoofs illustrate the proverb that "A fou man an' a hungry horse gang aye fast hame." For there was no "Forbes Mackenzie Act" to close the public-houses at eleven o'clock, as I rejoice to tell there is now; but to "all hours" they were open, as long as the customers liked or the landlord would permit, and the disturbances thereby caused and the evils thereby done were "untelling."

The most persistent of these topers of fifty years ago were Gideon Elliot o' the Craigs, and Samuel Dickie o' Bentyhaugh. Luckily their farms lay on different sides of Blinkbonny, Craigie's being fifteen miles to the south-west, and Benty's twelve miles to the north-east. Even once a week was too often for them to meet, for in the madness of their cups

the one had been known to see the other *home* and back again to the "Black Bull Inn," their "howff" at Blinkbonny, regardless of the extra thirty miles at furious speed which they took out of their mettle ponies, for so their undersized roadsters were called.

The first time this happened, Craigie was convoying Benty. Robbie Rattray, the landlord of the "Black Bull," seeing Elliot take to the left, cried,—

"That's the wrang hand; that's no' the road. Whaur are ye gaun, Craigie?"

"I'll tell ye when I come back," was his reply as the two rode off; and they did tell him, about four hours afterwards, when they "rappit" him up and demanded "anither cheerer before they parted," although at each of the three toll-bars through which they had passed they had, after much knocking and bawling, roused the sleeping toll-keeper, and taken their "change" in whisky, for many of the toll-houses "sold a dram."

They had made but a short halt at Benty's, where luckily the poor ponies got a feed and a breath, while their masters took "a chack and a jug o' toddy." Back they came helter-skelter, wakening the toll-keepers again, for the laws about keeping the gates locked at night were strict, got a "stirrup-cup"—a "Deoch-an-doruis"—in the stable-yard of the "Black

Bull," parted when they had cleared the pend leading to the main street, and were cantering homewards as the farm workers were commencing their day's labour.

Toll-bars are now things of the past, with their white-painted gates open during the day, but closed across the road at night. Annoying they often were to doctors, called suddenly to a patient during the night, and to those who had ridden to the doctor's; for the faculty of "sleeping *on*," despite loud rapping and bawling, was possessed in an eminent degree by the keepers of toll-bars, notably in the earlier hours of the morning, by those who sold spirits.

Even when they were aroused, it took them what the impatient travellers outside called "a most unconscionable time" to gather their brains, and pull on hastily such garments as the weather suggested—slipshodly many of these were pulled on. Often did Baillie, the keeper of the "High Toll" of Blinkbonny, use his wife's undergarments on such occasions, and sometimes she used his.

"Come away, Dick. Come on, man. Look sharp!" had to be bawled again and again, and as often answered by, "Ou ay, I'm comin'—I'll be there the noo. Can ye no' let a body get on their claes?" before Dick's Kilmarnock nightcap, followed by his

motley figure, emerged from the door, carrying the key attached to a ram's-horn. Even then there was often delay, for the money drawn at the toll-bars was for maintaining the public roads, and, if Dick had to find "change," it required his return to the house, and often the dating of a square scrap of printed paper, called a "toll-ticket," available for that day only, stating that it cleared the following toll-bars: —"Filliesbridge, Broomhill, and checks," etc. Sad was the delay if it was necessary to light a candle in order to fill in the ticket.

No wonder that in cold, or drenching, gusty nights cross words were often uttered by impatient travellers, spurred on by errands which rendered delay highly dangerous. Such words, hurled as they were at a poor toll-keeper, dazed, sleepy, and often crusty, never had a quickening effect, rather the reverse; for, while fumbling with starving fingers to find the keyhole of the padlock (sometimes filled with ice) which bound the ends of the chain that fixed the gate, he often retaliated by saying, "I want nane o' your ill tongue. You're no' ma maister. I'm doin't as fast as I can, am I no'? It's you that's unreasonable; ye forget that 'a waited-on pat's aye lang o' boilin'.'"

When the gate was open, and the traveller had gone,

the toll-keeper, before shutting it, would look up and down the road and listen wistfully, saying to himself, "I wonder if I'll get a sleep noo. I hope sae. I think a's quiet," before he re-locked it. Probably he was hardly in bed before another interruption occurred, for farmers were early astir when going to distant markets; and as sheep and cattle were driven long distances, the drovers, studying the comfort of the animals, preferred the early morning; so that disturbed was the life, as well as poor the pay, of the keepers of the toll-bars, and their abolition has added to the comforts of modern road travelling, albeit the Road Tax may be felt to be heavier than the "tolls," for it is paid in slump. Besides, since railways have become virtually the monopolists of passenger and goods traffic, coaching, "posting," and even "carrier-ing" have so decreased, and the revenue drawn at toll-bars has consequently become so small, that, to use Jenny Tweedie's expression, when she blew out the candle while Jamie was hammering through the proper names in the early chapters of First Chronicles: "Tuts, tuts, the cost's o'ergangin' the profit; we'll stop it, Jamie, we'll stop it."

Fairs were very common in Blinkbonny,—hiring fairs, plant fairs, "horses and cattle," "wool and shearers," "ewes and lambs," etc.,—and great, for the

little place, were the numbers of people that thronged the streets on these occasions.

The hiring fair, at which farm servants of both sexes met and bargained with their masters, one of the first fairs of the year, was held in the main street. I have now before me a manuscript account of a hiring fair held in Biggar, on 6th February 1862, evidently prepared for the public press. I am not sure whether it has hitherto appeared in print; but I insert it as a *bona fide* specimen of the early style of a writer who, under many "aliases," has a small corner in modern bookshelves. Moreover, its glimpses of country life, as exhibited at a hiring fair more than twenty years ago, and its account of an expedient adopted to counteract the evils which I have been depicting, are those of an eye-witness; and to me, its perusal recalls vividly the hiring fairs of Blinkbonny.

BIGGAR HIRING FAIR, 6TH FEBRUARY 1862.

In the small town of Biggar, the centre of an extensive agricultural district in the Upper Ward of Lanarkshire, an annual fair is held in February, to which male and female farm servants, for many miles round, come, to meet masters, and engage for entering service at the ensuing Whitsunday term.

Farm servants, as a class, have not the same

facilities for receiving and entertaining friends, at their respective places of service, as domestic servants have.

The kitchen of the farmhouse differs largely in this respect from that of the private dwelling or mansion. In many places in Scotland the "gudeman and gudewife," after nightfall, occupy old arm-chairs on either side of the kitchen fire, and the other members of the household are seated around, at distances corresponding to their respective stations; the herd laddie often occupying the position of "little Jack Horner," but without the Christmas pie, as in Jack's case.

Mary, in the quiet house, is allowed, or at all events should be allowed, at certain times, to receive John after tea in her neat kitchen, which is generally neatest when such a visit is expected, and talk with him about the news, or another subject more interesting to both which our readers can guess; while Jenny at the farm can only steal out at the gloamin', and see her "bonnie Jocky," 'mang the "Corn Rigs," or on the "Lea Rig," in the "dell without a name," or "ahint the bonnie brier bush in our kailyard." Hence the exuberant glee and gallantry which the sons and daughters of rustic toil exhibit at a hiring fair.

It does one good to see the hearty honest grin of recognition, and to hear the kindly inquiries, and the

warm invitation "to come away and hae a crack for auld langsyne." This is right, but unfortunately the only resort to which they can go, in many places, is the public-house, and the ardent spirits there imbibed soon mar the humours of the fair, and objectionable scenes follow.

To remedy this evil, the clergymen and others interested in the welfare of the servants around Biggar, provided abundance of substantial temperance refreshments—tea, coffee, ham, bread and cheese, etc.—at a cheap price, during the fair, and Dr. Guthrie from Edinburgh, accompanied by a number of his Ragged School Musical Band, kindly came forward to aid them in their praiseworthy scheme.

Being anxious to see the working of the plan, we visited the fair, and will give a short account of the day's proceedings, trusting that the example of Biggar in this respect will be followed by all anxious to promote the real interests of the people.

The weather was fine throughout. The sun shone brightly on a busy scene in the wide main street of the town. There was the usual complement of barrows full of apples and oranges; stands or tents for the sale of gingerbread, biscuits, cakes, toys, trinkets, and glittering wares; great bargains by auction shouted from some *omnium gatherum* stores;

Mr. Merryman with his fantastic grimaces blowing his own trumpet, and catering for public patronage at "only twopence a head; walk in, only twopence!" a few rolly-polly folks; lotteries and wheels of fortune with their tempting bargains, and rhymes of "Nothing venture, nothing win," "Faint heart never won fair lady," "All prizes and no blanks,"—all of which received due attention.

It was an interesting study to see the trained eyes of the old farmers scanning the muscular power of the offerers of service, and the younger farmers bantering with the laughing, blunt girls about the "fees," whilst many a rustic joke and merry sally was heard. One blythe, sturdy young woman, although surrounded by hundreds, was telling two of her companions that "she had been in the fair for three hours an' hadna seen Onybody yet." It was not difficult to guess that her "Onybody" meant the "Somebody" of the old Scotch song,—

"My heart is sair, I daurna tell,
My heart is sair for Somebody;
I could wake a winter night
For the sake of Somebody.
Oh, hon! for Somebody!
Oh, hey! for Somebody!
I could range the world around,
For the sake o' Somebody."

Having remained some time in the fair, we entered

the Corn Exchange, a handsome and useful building recently erected in the town, which, for the day, served as the refreshment room; and a capital refreshment room it made, being capable of accommodating two hundred persons comfortably at one time, and for several hours it was thronged with those for whom it was intended.

The arrangements were excellent. We had hardly been seated when a waiter was alongside. He speedily executed our orders, and laid before us a large cupful of excellent scalding coffee, and a good thick slice of fruit loaf, of which we saw "stacks" at the upper end of the room. The viands and attendance were excellent, and Mr. Russell, who presided over the commissariat, deserves much praise for his admirable and liberal management.

The band of the Ragged School occupied the small gallery, and discoursed enlivening music during several hours of the day. The audiences evidently enjoyed the music. Many accompanied the band with their hands and feet, and some performed a solo on the floor, although it certainly was *not* on the "*light* fantastic toe."

The eyes of many kind women, and even of rough men, glistened with a tear as they looked on these boys. We were struck with the pathos with which

an old countrywoman started, whenever the music began, and, lifting up her hands, said, in a voice trembling with emotion, "Eh! brands plucked from the burning! brands plucked from the burning!"

We went up to the orchestra during an interval in the music, and found the faces of many of the boys buried in a ragged orange. They were twenty-two in number, dressed in a uniform of blue cloth with red facings. They seemed intelligent boys, and evidently highly delighted with their day's holiday—although from the willingness and vigour with which they played, it was not quite a holiday to them.

We asked one what he was going to be when he left school? He replied, smartly and cheerily, "A printer, sir." This was said so heartily, that it led us to think of the former and present position of these boys, not only saved from misery and ruin, but given back to society. "God be gracious to thee, my son," rose to our lips, and many a Christian in Biggar at the sight of these boys breathed out the words of Jacob: "The angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads!"

We next went through some of the inns and public-houses, and found them full, although not very noisy. We saw almost no "eatables" on the tables, but no lack of "drinkables," and, having visited both, we have

no hesitation in stating that the balance of comfort, economy, and pleasure, was decidedly and largely in favour of the Temperance Refreshment Rooms at the Corn Exchange.

The promoters of the change, having observed that the most dangerous time was in the afternoon, when the hiring was over, and the "treating" usually became general, arranged a soiree to take place at three o'clock in the afternoon, charging only twopence for admission. The largest church in the town was found too small, and another was opened which was also crowded; at both of these meetings addresses were delivered, and some hymns prettily sung by the Ragged School band. Dr. Guthrie was, of course, the lion of the evening. A gentleman, in whom every confidence can be placed, visited the public-houses during the soiree, and found few people in them.

We left by the evening train, and, amongst the hundreds that left at that time, we saw only two persons intoxicated. These were evidently old topers. The crowd at the station was orderly; the train was a long one, and considerable time elapsed before it was fairly in motion. There was a good deal of small talk in the full third-class carriage in which we were seated, but less that was objectionable, than we ever heard on such an occasion. A decent-looking

man at our elbow thus expressed his opinion of the arrangement: "It's a grand plan yon; when a body gets a cup o' tea or coffee and a gude slice o' bread, they're no sae muckle the waur o' a dram." And, although not quite the idea of the promoters, who wish to abolish entirely the drinking customs at such fairs, yet there is truth in the canny man's remark, for, where only ardent spirits could be obtained, a small quantity tells powerfully on the empty stomachs, especially of those unaccustomed to them; but we trust that the temperance refreshments will banish the stimulants altogether. The Inspector of Police, with whom we had a conversation, heartily praised the scheme and wished for its universal adoption.

Such is a short account of Biggar Hiring Fair as it passed off this year. Those who had been there on previous years acknowledged and rejoiced at the improvement so kindly planned, and so nobly carried out. A reform was needed, and devised, and introduced. The plan had these excellent qualities which ought to characterize every scheme of the kind: it was *simple, sensible, suitable,* and therefore successful; and we lay it before our readers for their consideration and adoption in similar circumstances. We understand that commercially the

scheme paid; and it can only be permanent when this is the case. The labours of love of the promoters were amply rewarded. We recommend it cordially. Dr. Guthrie cannot be always secured,[1] and it is a question whether a mixture of soiree and concert might not suit many places better. This could easily be settled by local committees, and we leave the matter there, hoping that all who have the opportunity will "go and do likewise."

The great fair of the year was held in September, and it was a busy day in Blinkbonny. Horses, cattle, and sheep covered the Annie Green. There were tents driving a brisk trade in refreshments, but the principal attractions for young folks were on the main street. Cart-loads of young pigs squealed, and poked their noses into each other, or into the nets that covered the cart. Benjie Cranstoun, the cooper, had what seemed the result of a year's labour before him; tubs, boynes, and waterstoups; cheese presses and "chessarts"; milk dishes of all kinds — leglins, cogs, hawnies, skimmers, boats; spoons, spades, stamps, and prints for butter; ladles of great size and strength; porridge-

[1] Alas, no! This lover of the whole human race, and friend of the friendless and of the fallen, entered into his rest in 1873, and "devout men carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

sticks, baking-rollers, "nickit" and plain; clothes "bittles" and pins; bickers, luggies, corn and potato measures and "cappies"; egg-cups, creepie stools, and other wooden wares for domestic and farm use. His wife was head saleswoman. The custom of "priggin' doon" was universal, and a higher price was always asked than was expected.

Glib was May Cranstoun's tongue, and "gleg" was her eye, as she hooked a customer, or let her go, knowing that she was sure to come back. As an illustration of what was going on at every stance or stand in the fair, I give a specimen of May's dealing, premising that I leave the reader to infer that she was doing business with different customers at once, although I do not give *their* words.

"That's an extra gude tub, mem—it is that, I assure ye. I never sell't a better—very strong an' no' owre heavy. Oak every stave o't, an' a' as hard as airn. I wad get eight shillin's for't easy in Larkton agin Tyesday fortnicht, but to save expense o' cartin', I wad take seeven shillin's an' saxpence. What? bocht a better mony a time for five shillin's? My certy! it wad hardly pay the girrs, let-a-be the wood, no' speaking o' the wark. I canna fend at less than seeven shillin's an' saxpence. But I maun speak to this woman—twentypence, but I'll say eichteenpence to you.

A shillin'? D'ye ken that thae mahogany staves is frae thousands o' miles ayont the seas? 'Deed an' I will *not* tak sax shillin's or sax an' saxpence either; ye'll need to wait till I'm dune wi' this lady. A twentypence luggie for fifteenpence, an' a parritch-stick into the bargain! Did ye ever! Seeven shillin's, if I'll gie a nickit roller intilt? So ye may; I'll say seeven an' 'hrippence for the twa. Weel, weel, say sixteenpence—thankee—Aweel, 'hrippence is 'hrippence, but we'll say 'done.' Ye have gotten a bargain—you've wared your siller, no spent it, as oor man says—Thankee; Proudfitt, did ye say? I'll gie him't when the cart ca's."

The village drapers, shoemakers, etc., had also "stands," thrifty wifies had webs of burn-bleached linen and hanks of lint yarn, which they had spun on the wee wheel; indeed, almost everything needed for house, bed, or back, could be had at the fair.

At one fair, "Wombwell's Menagerie" was the great attraction. The elephant was occasionally led through the street, and this created the greatest sensation of my young days in Blinkbonny. The shows, even the hobby-horses, were deserted. Big Murray and other two boys had hired themselves to "Habbie-horsie," to drive his whirling machine, but whenever the elephant appeared their occupation was

gone, so were they. Murray had never seen even the picture of an elephant, and when the huge brute appeared he meditated flight, but curiosity overcame fear, for he took its trunk for its tail. The crowd was such that he could only see "that it was gaun tail foremost, an' was like a muckle blue cart-horse wi' nae hair on't, an' the breechin (its ears) was wider than ony he ever saw, but he never could see its head yet."

When the runaways returned to "Habbie-horsie," he was angry at the want of custom, and broke out upon the boys. He finished his tirade with "I've a gude mind to pay off baith o' a' the three o' ye wi' nae-wages," but the disappearance of the elephant brought back his riders, and the three got into the "tread-mill," and pushed its spokes,—no easy matter,—for four times in the course of the small circle they had to clear the cross planks that formed the sole of the whirligig. Big Murray earned enough to pay for the menagerie, and went up intending to go in at feeding-time, but the pictures terrified him, and he heard some growls, so he contented himself by peering in at every crevice that he could find; and although he saw little, he still saw enough to keep him in a state of terror all night.

When the menagerie left next day, Murray saw

his old friend the elephant again, as he declared it had done on the previous day, "walkin' backwards, wi' the funniest tail he ever saw, for the end o't was reekin', but he couldna see its head, for it had on a great big sark made o' black claith, an' he only saw its feet—they were like horses' black mooth-pocks."

The "Carters' Play," so graphically depicted by Miss J. L. Watson in her delightful volume, *Round the Grange Farm,* is an equally vivid picture of the "Carters' Play" at Blinkbonny. It was the great "ploy" of the year, with its mounted procession, streaming flags, "buskit" horses glancing with ribbons and looking-glasses; its clattering races of thick-legged cart-horses along the macadamized road,—for one of the laws, to secure that only cart-horses should run, was thus announced by Wee Peelie, the clerk of the course, "That nae horse was allooed to rin that had ony bluid in't;" its rough and round dinner, consisting of enormous pies or lamb legs, cooked at the baker's, where they were called for after the races were over, and carried off and consumed in private houses; the noisy evening meeting, at which even the very liberal law that no more than six should speak at once was disregarded; the "roupin' o' the flags," and the absurd prices paid for the honour of carrying "Speed the Plough" next year.

There was, besides, the constantly-recurring question of Jamie Dunbar, "hoo they were to deal wi' refractory chara'ters that robbit the society by gettin' benefit money, when they were as well as he was? —for just look, for the last seven 'ear, Tam Gray had gotten sick siller every 'ear," etc. etc.; as well as the yearly recurrence of fighting between half-tipsy men; and the snellness with which "Constable" Anderson or Messenger Baillie separated the combatants, handcuffed them with belts, and locked them up in a damp aisle in the churchyard.

Miss Watson has also done such justice to "the penny weddings," that I need say no more than that George Lockhart's school often rang with their deaving din. But lest I should weary my readers by dwelling on matters that either possess no interest, or are still common at fairs, plays, etc., I will lay aside the blotting-paper of these earlier days, and try to decipher some sheets of a more recent date.

CHAPTER VII.

INCIDENTS AT GREENKNOWE.

"O Bessie Bell and Mary Gray,
They were twa bonnie lassies."—*Old Ballad.*

BEFORE my brother's death and my father's illness brought me back to Blinkbonny, I had, as already stated by Mr. Andrew Taylor in the opening chapter, been prosecuting my studies for the Christian ministry at the University of Edinburgh. John M'Nab and I lodged in the same house, and, as he was nearly through the Divinity Hall, he was of great help to me in my studies. In 1835 he was licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery of ———, and in May 1836 he paid me his long-promised visit, and kindly consented to supply the pulpit of Mr. Barrie, our esteemed parish minister, who was attending the meetings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh.

He and I were returning from "Nancie's Knowe" on the Friday night on which he arrived, for that was the first place to which strangers were taken by friends

who wished to introduce them to the beauties of Blinkbonny.

"This place is well named Blinkbonny," said John; "I congratulate you on your home, although I regret that my hopes of seeing you appear as the Rev. Robert Martin will not now be realized. Scenery like this forces us to confess, that 'God made the country, but man made the town.'"

As we reached the Broomhill road we met Mrs. Stewart of Greenknowe, her daughter Mary, and Lily Easton, the youngest daughter of the farmer of Blinkbonny Mains—one of the largest farms in the parish. The farmhouse was an old mansion-house, and was situated about two miles to the north-east of the village.

After introducing Mr. M'Nab to the ladies, and stating that he was to occupy Mr. Barrie's pulpit during his attendance at the Assembly, I proposed to join the ladies in their convoy of Miss Easton. John gallantly offered his arm to Mrs. Stewart, which she politely accepted, thus leaving Miss Stewart free, for Mrs. Stewart's health was indifferent, and she needed the support of a companion in her walks.

"You young folks can go on with Miss Easton to the Mains road," said Mrs. Stewart; and, turning to Mr. M'Nab, added, "That is, if I am not trespassing too

largely on your kindness." John assured her, with a polite bow, that the reverse was the case.

Miss Easton shook hands warmly with Mrs. Stewart, and frankly with Mr. M'Nab, and the three of us set out. A prettier walk or a finer night could not have been wished, and, as I thought then, and dare say yet, the two ladies were as pretty and as fine as either.

Lily Easton was a tall, well-formed young lady, somewhere about twenty years of age. Her hair was jet black, wavy over her prominent brow, and two love-locks lay along her ears and fell in massive, well-formed, glossy ringlets down on her shoulder. Her complexion was pronouncedly that of a brunette, but her eye, although black, was not piercing—it was rather mild and gracious; her features were good, and her face had an indefinable sweetness of expression about it, compounded of sincerity, intelligence, and playfulness, that one felt obliged to her for being allowed to look on it. She wore that night a dress of Earlston gingham, of a small brown and white checked pattern, over which was loosely thrown a light knitted Shetland shawl. Her head-dress was a dark brown straw sun hat, with a wide brim depressed before and behind, and in its ribbon band were a few sprigs of forget-me-not, evidently put there lately, and not by a *lady's* hand.

Miss Stewart's dress was of the same material, for Miss Whale, of Earlston gingham notoriety, visited Blinkbonny periodically, and the uniform excellence of her wares, combined with the good taste displayed in their design and colouring, were duly appreciated by all thrifty housewives. The other parts of Miss Stewart's dress were similar to Miss Easton's, excepting that there were no "forget-me-nots" in her hat.

Mary Stewart herself was as nice a young lady as any one could meet, tall, well-featured, frank, graceful, and accomplished. It is difficult to describe her face, for it had no outstanding features—all were regular, well-balanced, and effective. Her hair was of an auburn hue, abundant and smooth; her hazel eye was sprightly, honest, and benevolent; her mouth just inclining, but merely inclining, to the small side, and seldom without a pleasant smile on its rosy lips.

Mary Stewart was Lily Easton's one young lady friend; Mary had more, many more; Lily had many acquaintances and friends,—certain am I that she had no enemies,—but she leaned on Mary in matters of all kinds, from dress upwards, and hers was such a busy life at home, that it was good for her that Mary Stewart lived so near, and was so leal and true.

Our talk was of the beauties of the summer even-

ing, for the air was fragrant with the odour of the hawthorn blossom; of John M'Nab, in whose praise I was not sparing; and, before we parted, it was of "the young doctor," Charles Forrest, who was one of the apprentices of Dr. Stevenson, "the old doctor." For before getting the degree of M.D., young surgeons were required to practise under duly qualified medical practitioners for a certain time before being allowed to become fully-fledged doctors on their own account.

Dr. Forrest was a frank, rattling, well-educated, clever young fellow, with an extraordinary amount of energy, determination, and good sense. He was of middle height, had a good address, a face in which self-reliance, forethought, and power seemed blended with genial humour and human sympathy, and an athletic, well-knit, mobile frame, that looked like a personified combination of strength, courage, and endurance.

Lily Easton said little about Dr. Forrest, but she evidently liked to hear him spoken of. Mary Stewart had known him as a boy, and spoke of him as "Charlie Forrest," and as we parted she said to Miss Easton, "Take care of the forget-me-nots in your hat, Lily; for although they are not neatly put in, they are as well done as Charlie had time for; but don't build any castles in the air about them, for he's a rattleskull of

a laddie, Charlie, and does things of that sort more out of the exuberant goodness of his heart, than that he means anything in particular."

"Thank you, Mary," said Lily, with a frank smile; "you can trust me with the forget-me-nots; for, if it was Dr. Forrest that put them in my hat, they grew in your garden first, and will remind me quite as much of you as of him." And "Forget-me-not, Mary," and "Good-night, Mr. Martin," saluted us as we started on our homeward walk, accompanied by a humorous bow and a double wave of her hand.

When Lily reached home she took off her hat, but paid so little attention to the forget-me-nots, that she hung them up, hat and all, and set to pressing household calls.

When Miss Stewart and I rejoined Mrs. Stewart and Mr. M'Nab, their faces were also turned homewards, and they seemed to be enjoying each other's conversation. John saw Mrs. Stewart into the parlour, where Mary had preceded them, and had her mother's cushions comfortably placed before she arrived. I followed, and we chatted for half an hour. Mrs. Stewart asked us to stay to supper, but, this being the first day of John's visit to me, we declined her kind invitation, and arranged to spend the Tuesday evening of next week at Greenknowe. We had a long talk of college

days that night, continued, indeed, to an unreasonable hour, long after Maggie, my sister, had bidden us good-night. It sounded strange at first for me to hear him called Mr. M'Nab by every other body; but Maggie said to me next morning, "You should not call Mr. M'Nab '*John*,' now that he is licensed as a preacher of the gospel;" and Maggie was right.

Mr. M'Nab's services were enjoyed by many on whose good judgment I had reliance. Mrs. Barrie thanked him warmly, and said, amongst other things, "I only wish Mr. Barrie had been present to share the pleasure which I am sure the entire congregation has felt." Bell, the manse servant, admitted "that she really couldna say that she had missed Mr. Barrie, for the young gentleman preached like an auld man."

Old George Brown, the Father of the Session, went to the vestry at the close of the service and said, "My young friend, ye certainly hae the *gift*, an' I think ye hae the *grace* too. Excuse me for counsellin' ye 'that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee,' as Paul said to Timothy; an' mair-betoken he said, 'be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;' 'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'

"An' if ye want to carry out the precep', 'Let no

man despise thy youth,' mind the receept that Paul gies Timothy for puttin' *that* oot o' a'body's power, for the very same verse ends wi', 'but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity;' an' the very neext verse says, 'Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine;' an' the very neext again says, 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee,'" etc. He ended with, "Now that ye are licensed, *a Naphtali*, mind an' preach so that folk may say o' you, 'Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.'"

George's patriarchal appearance, and his solemn words, greatly impressed as well as delighted Mr. M'Nab; and this was also my first introduction to this fine old descendant of the martyred John Brown of Priesthill.

Tuesday evening at Mrs. Stewart's was one of great enjoyment. We had not been two hours there before John manifested a fondness for flowers, that, during the five years of our intimacy, I had never observed; and even for the shrubs that grew in the shadier walks of Greenknowe, that surprised Mrs. Stewart, whom I companioned, while Mary introduced Mr. M'Nab, judging by the time they took to it, to every flower and shrub in the garden. John—I beg his pardon, Mr. M'Nab—appeared to take most interest in a bed of forget-me-nots which grew in the lawn

before the door, for he was back at it four times. "He had never seen flowers so large; the red tinge of some petals was new to him." And they seemed to redden his face; a bed of lily of the valley had also a special charm for him, but when looking at it, his face looked paler than usual, and anxious; indeed I fancied that his frame quivered a little. Back he came to the forget-me-nots again, and his face got redder than ever, as he asked a sprig to preserve as a curiosity (?), and, if not presuming too much, a *plant* to take home with him. John meant a week hence, when he left Blinkbonny; Mary—generous, gentle Mary—thought he meant now, went for a flower-pot, scooped out a good big bunch with her hollow trowel, put it into the flower-pot, and said she would send the servant with it to Mr. Martin's to-morrow.

Mr. M'Nab looked a little flurried as this was going on, stammered out that he "was afraid it might incommode Mr. Martin; would Miss Stewart be so kind as keep it in a cool place till he was going home? He would call occasionally to see it" (?). Mary "would be delighted" (delighted to what?—keep the plant, or see Mr. M'Nab when he came to see it?). Mary had apparently forgotten about Lily Easton's hat and Charlie Forrest's busking of it. The amateur gardeners came in. Mr. M'Nab

and I left shortly after supper, and he said, before we were out of the grounds, "These are most agreeable people—a very delightful family! Miss Stewart appears to be a very superior young lady; she seems passionately fond of flowers."

My sister Maggie was engaged to be married to John M'Lauchlan, a young architect and land surveyor in Larkton; Mr. M'Nab knew this, and it made their intercourse very frank; for, after the nine-days' wonder and gossipy congratulations of an announced engagement are past, an engaged young lady enjoys a certain amount of exemption from some of the hard and fast laws of social reserve, within which she formerly considered herself confined.

Mr. M'Nab's heart and head were in a perplexing maze, and, although he might not himself know it, he was confusedly longing for a friendly ear and a love-experienced heart, that could listen patiently and sympathize warmly; one that would intuitively know what he wished to say, and lovingly encourage him to say it. *I* could not do—no *man* could. Only a gentle, loving woman can appreciate and draw forth, respond to, and reduce to harmony the bewildering chaos of sound, from the loudest chord to the all but inaudible quiver, which the strings of the excited heart emit on such occasions.

Maggie's recent experience in such matters tended to qualify her for playing the part of confidant to Mr. M'Nab. He evidently thought so, for on the day following our visit to Greenknowe, the two were in frequent and deep consultation. I saw little of him excepting at meal-times, and, when I proposed a walk in the evening, he told me, not a little to my astonishment, that I must wait till he had his hair cut. For he had been pretty often at the looking-glass, and Maggie's sisterly confidence had already got the length of suggesting some needed "tidyfications" on his person and dress, which only a young lady could have discovered.

The only barber of which Blinkbonny was possessed was George Lockhart, and Maggie had herself gone to "tryst" him to come to the house after tea; she had also told him that it was the young minister who had preached on Sabbath that required his hair-cutting services, and that it was more "trimming" than cutting that was needed. She succeeded so well in impressing George with the necessity of doing his best, that he appeared in his Sunday clothes, with a new brush and comb, a clean overall cloth and towel, and thoroughly organized for his work, which was done carefully and well, to the decided improvement of Mr. M'Nab's personal appearance.

As soon as the hair-cutting was over, George rose from the mechanical occupation of barber to his professional dignity as schoolmaster, and, after referring to the abilities of his younger son, Simon, he expressed a hope that the lad would occupy a yet higher position than himself. "I have," said he in a dignified tone, "put him as far forward in his preliminary studies as I could. He has been following these up at the parish school, under Mr. Torrance, who says that he is a boy of considerable parts, and already of respectable scholarly attainments. I aspire at his studying for the ministry, and, if not trespassing on your time, I would be much obliged by your giving me some information about the probable expense, and the time, etc. required, so that I may 'organize' for his college curriculum."

Mr. M'Nab gladly complied with George's request, and gave him every requisite detail. I also told him that Simon was welcome to have the use of the class-books I had had at college. The *schoolmaster* was so elated, that, when John M'Nab produced his purse to pay the *barber*, George's look made him quickly pocket it again, which drew forth a most gracious "Thank you, Mr. M'Nab, for respecting professional etiquette," from worthy George.

Next day John got himself "up" with scrupulous

care; Maggie told him he looked as if he had come out of a bandbox. About eleven o'clock in the forenoon he started to ascertain if his pot of "forget-me-not" at Greenknowe was thriving. Mary Stewart had busied herself in the early morning with making chicken soup for Strachan Gemmell's two younger children, who were recovering from a severe fever. Hastily throwing a shawl over her "morning wrapper," she carried the soup to the invalids herself, and was on her way home when she caught a glance of Mr. M'Nab coming in the direction of Greenknowe.

Mary Stewart was always neat, as neat in her morning dress as in any other; but she did not wish to be caught in it. She quickened her pace so suddenly, that he saw clearly she had observed him. He quickened his, for he was very anxious to overtake her. He had spent so long at his toilet, and, in his own opinion, so successfully, that he was particularly anxious for Miss Stewart to see him at his best. He uttered twice, the second time *very* distinctly, that peculiar, unwriteable half cough, half word, which is not infrequently used to arrest the attention of a person a short distance in front. Mary heard both as if she heard them not, for the same feeling that made Mr. M'Nab anxious to be seen, made her anxious to get out of sight; each "Hum" coughed by him,

however, perceptibly quickened her pace, and, in her nervous hurry to get into the house before he saw her in her morning wrapper, she whisked smartly through the little gate, and unfortunately, unintentionally, and very unlike her usual, she closed it "with a clank."

John was confounded, and disappointed, and angry; he turned quickly on his heel, strode wrathfully to the top of Nancie's Knowe, along the Broomhill road, and up and down. His thoughts were not charitable, not at all in keeping with either his dress or profession. When he reached our house, Maggie was getting herself tidied for the day. John sat moodily

"Nursing his wrath to keep it warm."

Maggie found him so unsociable when she entered the room, that she asked him what was wrong.

"I wish," said he excitedly, "that I had not to preach for Mr. Barrie on Sabbath. I *cannot* do it."

"Why not?" said Maggie in amazement; then, wishing to recall a more pleasant subject, she added, "Go to Greenknowe in the afternoon, Mr. M'Nab; Mary Stewart will charm all fear out of you."

"Mary Stewart?" said he, rising suddenly, and, forgetting for the time his good manners, he turned his back on Maggie and said sullenly, "Mary Stewart?

No man was ever more grossly insulted than I have been to-day—and by Mary Stewart!—yes, by the Mary Stewart that you all think so much of here. She slammed the door in my face as if I had been plague-stricken. What do I care for Mary Stewart? I am as good as she any day. I wish I had never seen Blinkbonny;" and much more in the same strain.

Maggie listened in amazement, and allowed him to finish, then said quietly but firmly, "Mr. M'Nab, there has been some great mistake; Mary Stewart never insulted the meanest human being. Calm yourself, and tell me exactly what happened."

He detailed the morning's adventure very minutely, but did not calm himself. He grew more excited as he proceeded, and when he reached the "slamming" of the gate he strode up and down the room saying, "Slammed it in my face!—yes, slammed it,"—thumping his hand heavily on the sideboard,—"*slammed* it in my face!"

"Sit down, Mr. M'Nab, please," said Maggie. "Mary Stewart has the best-balanced heart in Blinkbonny; she must have been out on one of her morning errands of mercy, in what we women folks call '*household* costume'" (for a something of the kind had fallen out between John M'Lauchlan and herself, that did *her* John a great deal of good). "Young ladies are easily

startled in such circumstances. Perhaps," she added laughingly, "if you had been in the fishing garb you wore on Monday, you would have got as quickly out of her way as she did out of yours; but you were so *braw*, that you wished her to see you, and if you quickened your step, that would put her into such a flutter, that she would as nearly *run* as she dared, and the slamming of the gate is a proof of nervous hurry, but never of insult; Mary Stewart never"—

"For mercy's sake, stop, Miss Martin," for by this time John was seated at the table, with his forehead buried in his hands, occasionally blurting out "Fool, fool! ass, ass!" for his heart was hot within him. He again climbed to Nancie's Knowe, but his step was slower, and he looked perplexed and sad. He spoke a good deal to himself: very unkindly words he uttered concerning himself; very warm and apologetic ones to some one called Mary; very sage reflections on rash conclusions, very wise resolutions about being careful in future; very warm thanks to Maggie Martin; and when he returned to the house, "a sadder but a wiser man," he (but don't tell John M'Lauchlan) kissed Maggie, with tears in his eyes. From that day to this, the matter has never been reopened between *them*, although the Rev. John M'Nab sometimes refers to an incident in the begin-

ning of his career, in which "he foolishly plunged himself into a burning fiery furnace of passion, but a loving woman was the means of transforming it into a refiner's fire, by which he felt that much earthly dross and tin had been purged away, and himself made a vessel more meet for the Master's use."

Maggie urged Mr. M'Nab to call at Greenknowe in the afternoon, partly as a penance, partly as a restorative.

Mary Stewart and her mother were sitting together on a seat by the front door. As soon as he entered the gate, she came to meet him, and frankly apologized for her apparent want of courtesy in the forenoon; 'for," said she, "I saw you perfectly well; but I was not quite presentable, and I tried to get out of your way as quickly as I could."

Miss Stewart's words and proffered hand thrilled through his frame like an electric shock; they made him wince, and as nearly as possible weep. Miss Stewart, not having any idea of the fearful storm through which he had passed, — now changed into an almost miraculous calm, — or of the unhinging "groundswell" that was still beating within his heart, did not observe this. Mr. M'Nab took his seat beside Mrs. Stewart, but his eyes and his heart were with Mary; although one would hardly have believed

that he quite forgot to look if the pot of forget-me-not was thriving, and so did she. On the way home, he felt angry at himself for having been so remiss, and resolved to call next day and apologize for this most unseemly, although unintentional neglect.

The family at Greenknowe formed the subject of a long conversation between Mr. M'Nab and my sister Maggie that night. Evidently to him it possessed a very special interest, and Maggie had no difficulty in finding out that this centred in Mary. She had even less difficulty in speaking warmly of her, for they had been bosom friends, and those that knew Mary Stewart best, loved her most.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REV. JOHN M'NAB.

"When I sleep I dream,
When I wauk I'm eerie,
Rest I canna get
For thinkin' o' my dearie."

WHEN Mr. M'Nab went next day to inquire about his flower-pot and its valuable contents, he was accosted, almost immediately on entering the approach to Greenknowe, by Matthew Riddell, the jobbing gardener of the village, upon whose broad back lay the responsibilities of the outside work of many of the villas of Blinkbonny.

"I am very pleased to see you, sir," said Matthew; "it's seldom I meet in wi' a gentleman that cares onything about flowers. Miss Stewart has just been tellin' me hoo muckle ta'en up ye were wi' my handy-wark here. I only wish that I had been here maybe a day or sae before ye cam', to hae ha'en things a wee bit snodder."

Mr. M'Nab thanked him, and said that everything was so neat that he could see no room for improvement.

"Thank ye, sir," said the complacent Matthew; "it's very kind o' you to say that. I do the best I can. I canna get folk exactly to do what I want them; some's ignorant, an' some's narrow, an' some's feared, an' some's fair indifferent. There's thae reeklusses (auriculas), I could hardly get Mrs. Stewart to let me put them in at a'; an' thae spinks, they's ma ain raisin'. An' have ye seen oor berries? Thae's them. Me an' her aye casts out about the prunin' o' them. If I gied her her ain way, the busses wad be ruined; but I let her get her say, an' I tak' my ain way. An' look at the show o' fruit on this buss —they's 'Hedgehogs,' an' this is 'Green Gaskins,' an' this is 'Warrintins.'"

Matthew would gladly have gone on for half an hour, but Mr. M'Nab said, "I must now pay my respects to Mrs. Stewart; I think you said you had just seen Miss Stewart; I presume that both are in the house?"

"Mrs. Stewart 'll be takin' her bit nap after her dinner," said Matthew. "Miss Agnes is no' at hame the noo, an' Miss Stewart gaed awa' out about a quarter o' an hour afore you came in, wi' her wee bit funny-shaped truint, to gather some bits o' faerns —brackens, ye ken; she's daft about them the noo; she's no half sae mickle ta'en up about my flowers as

she used to be. I'm sure brackens is puir trash compared wi' peenie roses an' sic like; but I can tell ye a' the names o' a'thing here mysel' far better than she can. For instance, this is"—

But Mr. M'Nab showed signs of impatience, greatly to Matthew's surprise and mortification, and, without making any laudatory remark about a bed of pansies in which Matthew took a special pride, and on which he was proceeding to enlarge, he interrupted him rather abruptly by saying, "In which direction did *Miss* Stewart go, please? I will not disturb Mrs. Stewart at present."

"That I canna tell," said Matthew, in quite a haughty tone; "in fac', I hae nae broo' o' their faerns an' weeds o' that sort; she galravidges hither and yont for them, frae the tap o' Dunsarg to the Shoggletae Muir, an's as proud o' a new speciment, as she ca's some bits o' crinshes o' roots she feshes in, as I am o' that grand Roderickdandrun" (Rhododendron). "I got that at"—

"Then you do not know in what direction Miss Stewart has gone?"

"No' me. I jalouse she'll be somewhere about the Fillies' Den," pointing in that direction, "for the young doctor an' her's never done speaking about what grows intilt. He gies out that he's a great

botanist, this young doctor—Farrest they ca' him; an' him and her trails about after wild-flowers when he can get awa'. I dinna think, howsomever, that he's wi' her the day; for I keppit him at my twal' hours gaun south; an' he says to me, says he, 'No fern-hunting to-day, Matthew, at least for me.' He's a nice clever lad, is Dr. Farrest; an' him an' Miss Stewart's, baith the twa o' them, just faern-daft."

Mr. M'Nab, finding it hopeless to get any definite information from the gardener, thanked him for his attention, and bade him good-day.

Matthew eyed his retreating form stolidly and said to himself, "He doesna seem to me to be as fond o' the flowers as Miss Stewart made him out to be. The young doctor's worth a dozen o' him amang them; and, batheration, havena I gaen an letten him awa' an' never shown him the pot o' forget-me-not that she says he made sae mickle wark about—I clean forgot hit."

So had Mr. M'Nab. He walked to the top of Nancie's Knowe and carefully scrutinized the land-scape, trying to make out "The Fillies' Den," or to observe in some of the wilder nooks around him any appearance of a lady botanist. Need I add that he failed? He sat down on the shady side of the hill

THE FILLIES' DEN

and fell a-thinking about the changed state of his feelings, compared with what they had been on the same spot the day before. How much insight he had got about himself; how humble he felt at his foolish anger; how differently he thought of Miss Stewart! He tried hard not to think of her at all, but fate had otherwise decreed, or rather, his heart would not be silenced, for, like Leonato, it would keep asking, "What shall become of this?" and the answer was such as the Friar gave:

> "So will it fare with Claudio,
> The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
> Into his study of imagination;
> And every lovely organ of her life
> Shall come apparelled in more precious habit,
> More moving delicate and full of life
> Into the eye and prospect of his soul.
> Then shall he mourn."

Besides, he was a little perplexed about this young doctor that she botanized with. Was he a suitor? Was he likely to become one? Was—was—was— And again he thought how harshly he had judged her, how in his heart he had wronged her, how unworthy he was of such a heart, what a mistake it would be for him to cultivate closer acquaintanceship; and these bitter thoughts brought on despondency, and made him quite miserable, when a voice behind him said,—

"Eh! look at yon fox skirtin' doon the side o' yon

hedge, in yon field. Its hole maun be in the Fillies' Den. Look, yonder it's! an' yonder's the young doctor; if he sees't, he'll clear a' the hedges an' be after't. It's clappit noo! it's hidin'! Na, he sees't; he's owre the hedge! Eh, but foxie's owre gleg for him!—he's denned."

The speaker was Big Murray. At the first word Mr. M'Nab rose quickly, looked in the direction to which Jamie so excitedly pointed, and, although he could not discern the fox, he pricked up his ears at the mention of the Fillies' Den, and clearly saw Dr. Forrest clear at a bound the hedge, and apparently chase something.

"Is that Fillies' Den?" said he.

"Ay, yon's hit doon yonder; but ye dinna see the hoose frae here; it's in this corner, but yon plantin' hides't."

"I see what I take to be a man walking in the park."

"Is't yon man wi' the big white hat on?"

"Yes, the same."

"Yon's a gentleman's servant to twae auld leddies —the leddies that bides in the big house that ye canna see for yon plantin'; they ca' them Sommerville. Eh! yonder's Miss Stewart o' Greenknowe comin' alang the Broomhill road; she's a terrible nice leddy,

she brings that nice things to our Tibbie an' our wee Strachan every forenoon. Tibbie's gettin' better, but Strachan's awfu' funny some way—the trouble's ta'en his head. I took a walk up to the Knowe here to gather fir-taps for my mother to kin'le the fire wi'; she says it's owre warm to keep it in a' nicht, an' the fir-taps has rozet (rosin) in them, an' they're grand for kin'lin' a fire after they're dried; this is a pockfu' o' them; an' good-bye, sir. I wad like to be at the Broomhill road afore Miss Stewart passes. She kens me, an' aye speaks awfu' nice to me."

"I'll go with you," said Mr. M'Nab, glad to have such an unexpected chance of meeting Miss Stewart; and, as they had reached the Broomhill road before she was at the Knowe gate, Jamie pointed out the "Fillies' Bridge," the "dookin' pool at the crook o' the den," and other objects of interest. He seized his bonnet as Miss Stewart approached, and pulled his head with it so as to make a very low bow, all the time grinning from ear to ear; and, after answering her inquiries about the little ones, he made a low bow to each of them and was off, still grinning with delight.

Miss Stewart said something about being again unfortunate in meeting Mr. M'Nab when she was not quite in even ordinary walking dress.

He made some complimentary remark about his

being so fortunate in meeting such an enthusiastic botanist, expressed his delight at the beautiful ferns she carried, asked her to repeat their names, said that many of them were new to him (most of them were), told about having met Murray accidentally on Nancie's Knowe, and how communicative he had been.

Miss Stewart, ever on the alert for opportunities of doing good, asked Mr. M'Nab, if, seeing that Mr. Barrie was from home, he would call for the sick Gemmells; adding that she would be happy to accompany him to the house, if he was not afraid of the fever.

John drew himself up and said, "I would be unfit to be a minister, if I could not fearlessly trust my Master to protect me in the discharge of my duty."

Miss Stewart applauded this sentiment, and thanked him warmly. Mr. M'Nab also spoke of his having earlier in the afternoon looked in at Greenknowe, and how the gardener had enlarged about the flowers.

Miss Stewart inquired at what hour it would be suitable for him to call for the Gemmells, and to John's great delight, she ventured timidly to hint that, if not asking *too* much, she would feel so much obliged to Mr. M'Nab if he could visit along with her two, or perhaps three, other invalids.

John readily consented to this proposal, and had arranged to come to Greenknowe on Monday after-

noon for this object, when Dr. Forrest rode up to them just as they reached Greenknowe gate.

"Well, what luck to-day, Miss Stewart?" rattled off the hearty young doctor. "Did you miss me? say you did—do. I had a beautiful specimen of 'Love lies bleeding' given me at Dunsarg Castle, and I was treasuring it up (in my hat) for you, but I lost it when leaping a fence after a fox; still, please consider it as *given*, and as a suggestive indication of my"—

"Be quiet a second, Charlie," broke in Miss Stewart, "and allow me to introduce the Rev. Mr. M'Nab." Whereat the young doctor said jauntily, "Delighted to meet you, Mr. M'Nab. You'll be going my way, I presume. Mr. Martin asked me to look in for an hour this evening to meet you." Then, lifting his hat, he said, "Good-night, Miss Stewart; now, Mr. M'Nab;" and the young minister and the young doctor proceeded to Blinkbonny together, but, strange as it may seem, John had again forgotten to inquire about, or even to refer to, his pot of forget-me-not.

Mr. M'Nab spent the greater part of Saturday alone, revising his manuscript, and otherwise preparing himself for Sabbath's work. I did not know until his visit was over, about the "morning wrapper" incident, but when he joined us at tea he was so nice, so "conversible," so sensibly-serious, that I wondered why I

had not felt more reverence towards him before. Towards Maggie his bearing was singularly affectionate, but more elevated in tone, more manly, yet more dependent than before, and this brought Maggie out in a way that astonished me. I felt that I was in the presence of "the wise and prudent," and was amazed at the profound thoughts and delicate intricacies of heart-lore that each displayed.

He told us that he had found it necessary to alter several expressions in the sermon he intended to preach. He had written it about a year ago, but its reperusal had revealed to him the fact that it was more an essay than a sermon; that there were expressions in it of which he did not feel the power at the time, but as he came to know more of himself, and more of the world, truths that had formerly been merely theoretical expressions had become living realities, home-thrusting and solemn.

His text was 2 Pet. i. 5–7: "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity."

The congregation did not know how much Mr. M'Nab had learned experimentally, during the past

week, about his own need of all the above graces, and perhaps he himself did not know, that thereby what had before been to him merely "Thoughts likely to prove useful to his hearers," had become transformed into active powers in his own heart and life.

His delivery was animated; in places where the memory of his recent want of temperance, patience, and charity rose up before him, his voice quivered, for out of the abundance of his *heart* his mouth spake. And, near the close, when he spoke of the octave of the Christian graces—of every note being required, and all to be in perfect tune, in order to secure for the heart and life the melody of joy and health,—how even one jarring chord would mar the harmony and produce discord and offence, the audience was thoroughly riveted. An audible sigh, as of pent-up feeling, followed his closing words: "But above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

The favourable impression which Mr. M'Nab had made on the previous Sabbath was deepened. Mrs. Barrie characterized this day's services as "refreshing and well fitted to produce good fruit," and expressed the hope that Mr. M'Nab would before long "give Mr. Barrie another day," for she was sure it would be a rest to him, and a treat too. Bell, her

servant, told the beadle that she "wad let her cow gang unmilkit for twa hours past her time, to hear sic anither discourse," and this, in Bell's opinion, was going as far as mortal would dare.

Old George Brown and several of the elders came into the vestry, and warmly thanked the young preacher. George Brown, in doing so, said, "Ye hae been a Naphtali this day to us, sir! If a' the sons o' the prophets gather such yerbs (herbs) to feed our people, there will be nae death in the pot. Ye've *lappit* the water, puttin' your hand to your mouth like Gideon's three hunder men, an' ye've broken yer pitcher amang us this day, an' ye hae held yer lamp in yer left hand, an' yer trumpet in yer richt ane, an'," placing his hand on the pulpit Bible, which had been laid by the beadle on the table, "ye had this sword, an' weel ye haun'led it. Our times needs faithful dealin', an' I would say to you, an' to a' young preachers, 'Preach the Word,'" pressing his hand firmly on the Bible, "*This Word;* be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, in fact, just live up to your preachin'. An' for yoursel' I may never see you in the flesh again, but I hope that you'll get a blessin' an' be a blessin', an' be like Mordecai, about wham we read in the last verse

o' the book o' Esther: 'For Mordecai the Jew was next unto King Ahasuerus, and great amang the Jews, and'" (with special emphasis) "'accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.'"

Thomas Baillie said "he wasna a bad hand that." Benjie Cranstoun owned "that he did no' that ill." Even rattling Charlie Forrest was soberer than usual. Big Murray waited to bow to him, and said to the old beadle, "He kens me; I showed him a fox makin' for the Fillies' Den, an' he's comin' to see wee Strachan the morn."

Lest my readers may think that I am over-praising Mr. M'Nab, I have only quoted the opinions of others, and I insert here what I have often repeated in his hearing, that I never heard him come up to his second Sabbath's work at Blinkbonny.

His "visiting" of Tibbie's children was comforting to all the Gemmell household, specially so to Big Murray. Wee Strachan's "something wrang wi' his head" greatly exercised him, and set him to invent sources of amusement, childish but thoughtful. All day he kept telling the child, "A minister's comin' that kens me," until, to the delight of all, Strachan smiled intelligently and said, "Kens you;"

and after the visit, Jamie still kept saying to the child, "He kens me," and telling him about the fox.

After the visitation was over, Miss Stewart and Mr. M'Nab returned to Greenknowe. They had scarcely entered the avenue when Matthew Riddell, pointing to a heap of stones, said to Miss Stewart, "Is thae ugly eneuch for ye? They're the ill-fauredest, irreg'larest I could get. Will ye hae eneuch there to mak' that rookery, or crockery, or cookery, or rockery, or whatever ye ca'd, that ye're gaun to big in the plot that I had the bonny dalisses (dahlias) last year;" then, turning to Mr. M'Nab, he was preparing to *enlarge*, and his immense right fore-finger was slowly travelling to his left thumb, when Miss Stewart said, "These will suit admirably, Matthew, but there are not enough—as many again will be required. But we must not detain Mr. M'Nab;" and they moved on.

"Ay—hum hum—aweel!" with a shrug; then, "Excuse me, sir, for forgettin' to speir at ye last week, when will I bring the forget-me-not? When will ye be leaving, if you please?"

"Oh," said Mr. M'Nab, "I had quite *forgotten* about the *forget*-me-not. I leave to-morrow about two o'clock; will you kindly leave it at Mr. Martin's any time before then?" and disappeared.

"Forgotten about the forget-me-not, an' him made as mickle wark about it! It's like thae Auld Kirk ministers, to get folk to howk holes in their ain plots to fill their pats, an' then to forget a' about it; that's Erastianism a' through. Mr. Morrison, nor nae ither Secession minister, wad'a' done sic like."

Mr. M'Nab's reception by Mrs. Stewart was very cordial as well as respectful, for she had relished his Sabbath's services, and she looked upon his visiting of the invalids as a personal favour, for all the Greenknowe household took a practical interest in the suffering and the infirm. Need I add that he enjoyed the visit immensely.

On his return, Maggie, he, and I spent a very pleasant evening. He spoke a good deal about the Greenknowe folks, and it was not difficult to see that he was an admirer of Miss Stewart. I began to joke him on the subject, but he stopped me quickly by saying, "Robert, I have neither income nor position yet; no man has any right to make advances to a lady, until he has a reasonable prospect of making her nearly as comfortable as she is at home, and in this case that will not be easily done. Moreover, contact with one possessed of such excellent qualities, not to mention personal attractions, as Miss Stewart undoubtedly possesses, makes a man, at least it makes

me, have such a low opinion of myself, that the sense of my utter unworthiness dominates all other feelings; and as this is my last night with you, references to that subject will make it a duller one than any of us, I am sure, would wish it to be."

"John has become quite a philosopher," thought I, as he delivered this dignified speech, and Maggie followed him up by saying, in reference to myself, "What does he know about these things? He has never been in love yet;" and to Mr. M'Nab, "I am glad that you have put your foot so firmly down on him for trying to joke on such a subject. He's rather fond of that, and often provokes John and me before others, as well as when only we three are together; and the more we seem annoyed, the better he is pleased. Do give him it, Mr. M'Nab! don't spare him."

"Maggie has become a philosopher too," thought I; and I begged pardon from each for my past offences, and proposed, as the "darker gloamin'" was bringing the night, that we should take a stroll to see the evening beauties from Nancie's Knowe. Mr. M'Nab did the most of the speaking, and wonderful speaking it was. After a short silence he looked upwards around the sky, then downwards over the earth, and said, "My Father made them all," and went on

to apostrophize the stars, etc., rising from nature up to nature's God. Dr. W. B. Robertson has, however, beautifully embodied similar contemplations in "words that burn," and he has very kindly allowed me to lay them before my readers, for which I feel certain that they will heartily join me in thanking him.

"A lowly man—He takes my sins, and bears the heavy load;
A lowly man—He takes my hand, and leads me up the road;
And when I know this lowly man is my Creator! God!
Oh, this hath solved me much dark speech, and loosed tongues that were dumb!
For all creation round me now a gospel has become,
And what had seemed to me before *mere* wild, confusèd Babel,
Is now a fire-tongued Pentecost, proclaiming—CHRIST IS ABLE!
The thunders, in the crashing skies, announce it as they roll;
The lightnings, on the black storm wall, write it in vivid scroll;
And stars repeat it, down the dark, in mystic jewelled light;
The Urim and the Thummim on the breastplate of the night;
And strong Orion shouts to me what slumbered in old fable,
And echoes from eternal night-vaults answer, Able! Able!
And comet, cresting bending heavens, waves echo to the word,
Like waving white plume in the star-mailed helmet of the Lord;
For all creation its Evangel utters forth abroad,
Into mine ear, when now I know my Saviour Christ is God."

Mr. M'Nab left us next day. Matthew Riddell delivered the pot of forget-me-not, but, unfortunately, into my hands, for I was again tempted to joke Mr. M'Nab about it. His look was such a compound one, when I delivered it with kind regards from Greenknowe, that despite the efforts of both to look indifferent, our faces showed that we were enjoying a capital dumb joke, which soon over-

came the forced restraint, and ended in a *very* hearty laugh,—indeed, so hearty, that it brought Maggie in from a neighbouring room to ask the cause of it, and to share it. John and I either forgot our good manners, or could not get ourselves under control, for we turned our backs on Maggie and laughed immoderately; and when I attempted to restrain the laugh, my efforts were in vain, for, as soon as I had got my face straightened to something like speaking order, a choking sensation in my throat burst the bounds of decorum, and set me off again.

When I did get sober enough to say that Matthew Riddell had marched into my shop with a flower-pot, and said, before my assistants and customers, in his loud canny way, "This is a present to the young minister that's stoppin' wi' you. It's a pot o' forget-me-not, an' it's to himsel', wi' Miss Stewart's best respecks," Maggie ran out of the room, laughing as heartily as we.

At dinner we were a noisy, almost a boisterous party. When Mr. M'Nab got into the gig to go on his way, and we had bidden him good-bye, Maggie suddenly remembered, as he was just starting, that we all had forgotten the precious pot, and, hurrying back for it, she handed it to him with a comical face, and he seemed so taken and tickled, that he

could only nod a firm "yes" to her "Remember to bring a few sprigs of it with you when you return in September," for he had promised to come to Maggie's marriage.

Lily Easton called that afternoon at Greenknowe, and, in walking through the garden with Miss Stewart, she saw the gap in the bed of forget-me-not. "Either Dr. Forrest has been dispensing very general favours," said she with a merry voice, "or some other body has been botanizing."

"Oh," said Miss Stewart innocently, "Mr. M'Nab, Mr. Martin's friend, who has been supplying Mr. Barrie's pulpit for the past two Sabbaths, asked a plant. He was struck with its size and shade—it is a new variety—and he admired it greatly."

"It, Mary, *it!*" said Lily, with a very arch smile,—"admired *it* greatly! It!—Mary, Mary, you tried to tease me about Dr. Forrest's putting a few sprigs in my *hat*—what do you think of a young lady planting a whole root of it in a young minister's *heart?*"

"Heart, Lily!" and Mary Stewart, as nearly as was possible for her, looked cross, certainly she blushed crimson.

"Yes, my good, dear, innocent, loving Mary," said Lily. "What do you think?"

Mary had never thought on the little plant of

forget-me-not in the light in which Lily had set it; and only after putting this and that together, did it dawn upon her that possibly—but when she got that length, she roused herself and said, "Nonsense!—I won't think of it;" and if she did not quite succeed in this, she thought of it sensibly and pleasantly, for in that matter her eye had been single, and therefore her whole body was full of light.

CHAPTER IX.

BLINKBONNY MAINS.

"There's not a heath, however wild,
But hath some little flower
To lighten up its solitude
And scent the weary hour."

MR. EASTON, the farmer of Blinkbonny Mains, was a hard-working, industrious man. In his younger days he had himself held the plough, and made a little money in a smaller farm in the neighbourhood, called Gibbiesbrae. When the Mains came to be sub-let through the death of the former tenant, he took it for the remaining five years of the lease; and, having got a good bargain of the growing crop and stock, he was able to make ends meet, and to lay past a little during these years, for the place was in "good heart" when he got it. On the expiry of this lease, he had taken another nineteen years' "tack" of the place, fourteen of which had yet to run at the time I introduced Lily to my readers.

He had barely sufficient capital to carry on the farm comfortably and to do justice to it, so that it

might do well for him. He had, besides, a family of ten to educate and provide for; and although these, when in their teens, had helped him in the farm work,—for, to use his own expression, he had "a prime workin' fam'ly,"—some of them had taken small farms for themselves, and he had to help them a little; others had gone into business, and he had to find some money for them; three of the daughters had been married, and Mrs. Easton had all a Scotch mother's ambition to give them a "wiselike providin'." She had gratified this very natural feeling to a greater extent than her circumstances warranted, and the canny farmer of the Mains began to be a "wee pinched for siller," and to be spoken of as "a nice kind o' man; a hard-workin', weel-meanin' man, but sair back-wechted for want o' cash."

Things were evidently "getting behind" with him; he could not buy in the cheapest market, for he was a bad payer ("unco dreich" in Scotch phrase). He had also to sell at a disadvantage, for all produce had to be turned into cash as early as possible; and buyers knew this. So that, instead of the "Credit Raw" of stacks, which well-to-do farmers like to leave in their stackyards as long after their Candlemas rents are paid as possible, to show that they are "no' hurried for siller," the Mains stackyard was

early threshed out, and the grain turned into money, whatever condition the market was in.

There was not a harder-working woman in Scotland than Mrs. Easton, excepting, perhaps, Babbie Gaw, her six-foot-and-other-things-in-proportion servant. Although there was a good dining-room up-stairs, neatly kept and fairly furnished, the "mistress" seldom entered it. The under flat was her home, the higher parts her very occasional strolling-ground. She was seldom out of the kitchen-end during the day, excepting when the farm-servants were at their meals. In the parlour, she was more like a servant than the mistress, and was oftener going about the table than sitting at it during the meal times; for her healthy children had wonderful appetites, and she did the bread-cutting, the spreading, and the gathering up, herself.

She was a kindly, motherly, couthie, cleanly, ill-redd-up sort of sonsie body; never idle, seldom cross, but with no idea of genteel proprieties; not very particular either as to her grammar, her slippers, or her cap. Literary tastes or genteel notions she had none; she was truly gentle in heart and feeling, but not genteel. Her constantly-increasing motherly and housewifely cares, added to those of the dairy and the farm, and the necessity of "getting through," made

her always in a hurry to get on. She was sociable and hospitable; but not always, in the opinion of her husband and family (the daughters particularly), so presentable as they would like her to be. Still, she was never put about by any visitor; for even to Sir John M'Lelland, the laird, she would appear at the front door with her worsted "brat" on, her sleeves rolled up, her whole appearance worklike; and, accosting him with perfect frankness, would say, "'Deed, Sir John, ye maun just take us as ye find us; it's a thrang time the noo, an' we maun jist fecht awa, as the saying is, wi' the fou hand and the toom purse."

Mr. Easton was a diligent man, but not a good manager of men; he thought he could not afford the "big wages that were gaun;" and in his penny wisdom, he lost pounds by having inferior labourers. He had also to go about a good deal seeking money, and what he thought cheap bargains in horses and cattle. (I need hardly say that these generally turned out dear bargains.) He had no vices, but no outstanding virtues; and his worldly cares put the cultivation of his own mind, and consequently the home training and mental elevation of his family, entirely out of his head; or rather, to do him justice, the desire existed there, and nothing vexed him more

than that he could do so little to give it practical expression.

The family grew up healthy, clownish, active, barn-bred, honest-hearted, good-natured, affectionate, with some natural but no acquired politeness, clever with their hands, active with their limbs; or, as already stated, "a prime workin' fam'ly," according to their father; "a gude-hearted, weel-behaved, ram-stam lot," according to Thomas Baillie and Benjie Cranstoun.

"I cannot make out," said Mary Stewart to her mother and Agnes, on her return from a visit to the Mains,—"I really cannot make out where Lily Easton has got her manners, her sweetness, her cleanliness of mind, her almost bewitching grace of style; she has the manners of a duchess and the playfulness of a child; and she carries these all through her busy, trying, earnest life. However did such a 'gem of purest ray serene' appear at all in such an unlikely place?"

"You cannot say, at any rate," said Agnes, "that she's

> 'born to blush unseen,
> Or waste her sweetness on the desert air,'

for when I am at the Mains, the under flat of the house is like a market; and Lily seems a being from another world, doing the work of a 'brownie' with the grace of a fairy; if there are such things as *brownie* fairies, she is one of them—complexion and all."

"How she gets time to keep up her music," said Miss Stewart, "and however she manages to bring out of the old jingle of a piano, or 'spinnet' rather, such a pretty accompaniment to her singing, amazes me. If her aunt had been alive now, it would have delighted her to know, that the old spinnet she sent to the Mains, to fill up a corner in the large dining-room, and which she only saw used as a spare back table, is now Lily's consoler amidst the 'Babel's streams' of her depressing home."

"How did you find Mrs. Easton, Mary?" said Mrs. Stewart.

"Not much better, mother; still confined to bed," said Miss Stewart. "Dr. Stevenson and Charlie Forrest do not speak hopefully of her recovery; but they are greatly pleased that Lily got her coaxed into an up-stairs bed-room, where she is away from the din and clatter of the kitchen. And although Lily seems to me to be quite filling her mother's place in the kitchen and parlour, she is as neat and as quiet as ever; and a more cheerful, loving nurse I could not imagine. While I was copying a piece out of a big volume of old music, she glided gently to the spinnet, having left her mother's door open, and asked me, with her eye, if she might leave the dining-room door open also; played softly and sang sweetly some of Ralph

Erskine's 'Gospel Sonnets,' whispered, as she rose to leave, 'She'll sleep for at least an hour,' glided down-stairs; and, in fact, seemed to me to be everywhere and to do everything."

Illness was a new thing at the Mains, and it and Lily together made a wonderful difference in the quietness and order with which the down-stairs work was carried on. Even big Babbie Gaw's clanking step and former noisy tumbling about of dishes were exchanged for something very gingerly, *for her*. Dr. Forrest knew the house well, as it used to be, for he had attended young Robert Easton, who had met with an accident at the Larkton Yeomanry Races; this, while it required bandaging and treatment, did not need special quietness, and certainly did not get it, for Bob's room was like a "gaun fair" with inquirers.

Mr. Easton belonged to the Secession Church, and did not approve of races. Indeed, he did not care about his sons being in the Yeomanry at all, but it saved a little money in the way of taxes, for a horse used in the Yeomanry was exempted from duty, and Sir John M'Lelland was colonel, and the pay that Robert got was his principal pocket-money. Robert had picked up the broken-down remains of a swift, strong horse called "Malcolm Canmore," and by careful treatment, the veterinary surgeon and he, between

them, had made him into a handsome roadster so successfully, that Bob declared "he wadna tak' a hunder pound for him;" he had cost five.

Bob, unknown to his father, entered Malcolm for both the troop race and the hurdle race, and the great, strong-boned, mettle charger won them easily—in the language of the turf, "in a canter; he cleared the fences like a bird, the others were nowhere, either in the flat race or over the hurdles." Malcolm and Bob, or Bob and Malcolm, were the heroes of the day, and at the mess-table Colonel M'Lelland spoke highly of the feats of "Malcolm Canmore," referred in very complimentary language to Robert's riding, and asked a bumper to the prize-winners of the races, coupled with the health of Mr. Robert Easton and his famous charger, "Malcolm Canmore."

The toast was *very* noisily drunk; the cheering was so long and loud that the band's playing of "Rantin' Rovin' Robin" was nearly drowned, until some merry fellows, struck with the appropriateness of the selection, started lustily to sing the song itself, and all at the mess-table went linkingly and loudly through it, giving forcible expression to the lines,—

"He'll hae misfortunes great an' sma',
But aye a heart abune them a',
He'll be a credit to us a';
We'll a' be proud o' Robin.

"For Robin was a rovin' boy,
A rantin' Robin, rovin' Robin.
Robin was a rovin' boy,
A *rantin'* Roe-oe-oe-vin' Robin."

Cheers followed, glasses rattled, laughter rang, and the big drum had to be beaten again and again, before "Silence" for Mr. Easton's reply was secured.

Robert rose to his feet; the under part of his face was nut-brown, but his brow, having been shaded by his helmet, was comparatively white; the yeomanry dress had smartened him up, and he was "a strappin', buirdly, yald-looking young fellow." After the cheer which followed his rising was over, he said, "Cornal M'Lelland, officers, non-commissioned officers, and gentlemen all, I am certainly much obliged to you, Sir John—oh, I beg your pardon—Cornal M'Lelland, for the way and manner in which you have proposed my health, an' to all the comp'ny for the way and manner they have responded to it. I am quite aware, gentlemen all, that horse-racin' 's often a bad thing, and has been the ruin of many a man; an' I'm no' sayin' but that horse-racin' for the sake o' itsel', so to speak, leads to bettin' and gam'lin', and sic-like. But, Cornal M'Lelland an' gentlemen, yeomanry races are different, clean different. For if we are to be of any use at all, we must not only be dreelled an' able to ack up to the word o' command; but, for instance, if we were on active

service in our country's defence (hear, hear), and we're ready for it to-morrow, if the enemy likes to show face—(hear, hear, and great cheering). Well, as I was sayin', if we were on active service, our commanders would need scouts that could cross the country an' bring word about hoo the enemy lay, or somebody that could ride an express owre moor and fell, flood an' field, for maybe the reg'lar roads micht no' be open (hear, hear, capital); an' if we hadna races, an' *hurdle* races, hoo would our officers know where to find a scout or an aye-de-cang for any special express? Cornal M'Lelland an' gentlemen, I ken that I'll be fund faut wi' for this day's wark by them that disna consider the like o' that; but I'll tell *them*, as I tell you noo, that racin' like the day's races is a part o' a yeoman's trainin', an' the force would be o' little use in an emergency if it wasna for the like o' Ma'colm—(tremendous cheering, in which 'Canmore' was drowned). Alloo me then, Cornal M'Lelland and gentlemen all, in my own name, and in that of the other winners of the prizes at this day's races, to thank you for the way an' manner that ye have drunk oor healths, an' lang may the Larkton Yeomanry have men that can play '*Lochinvar*' when they're wanted."

Bob's rough-and-ready oratory seemed to warrant something more than the uproarious applause which immediately followed it, and several of his comrades,

in answer to the cry of "Up wi' him!" got him mounted shoulder high, on the tallest yeomen in the company, who carried him round the table, while the "Beltane Hall" rang with the excited shouts of the sturdy Larkton yeomen.

Robert had foolishly overestimated Malcolm's powers on the road home, and he spurred him to take a leap, in which the horse came off victorious, but the rider was pitched off, and so severely bruised, that he was in the doctor's hands for a fortnight. Many of his comrades called for Robert; most of them had also to see Malcolm. One of the "regulars," a sergeant in a cavalry regiment, was recruiting in Blinkbonny, and some friends brought him to see the charger. Babbie Gaw was working in the farmyard, near the court in which "Malcolm Canmore" was. A fellow who came with the sergeant, struck with Babbie's height, asked her impertinently if it was "cauld up there"?

"Whiles," said the callous Babbie; "but impidence whiles makes't het, so keep you a calm sough, ma man."

"Sergeant," said he, "you are a bold man; dare you kiss that giantess? I'll bet a crown you dare not."

"Done," said the sergeant. "Stake the money with the handsome girl, and I'll do it. A kiss from her is worth a crown any day; I'll have the kiss, and she'll keep the crown."

After the money was given to Babbie, the sergeant respectfully gave her a hearty smack, which she took in perfect good humour.

"If you want ane tae, Mr. Impidence," said Babbie to the other fellow, "ye'll get it for naething, an' something as cauld as the weather about ma head."

"He daren't," said the sergeant; "he's too lily-livered."

"Daren't!" said "Mr. Impidence";—"who's to dare me? Here goes!"

Babbie laughed, and opened her arms to receive him; he, however, did not get the length of a kiss, for she seized him by the collar, whirled him half round, and, catching him as best she could, sent him spinning over the wall into the "pigs' court," to the great delight of the small crowd in the "close."

As if he had not been already humbled enough, Babbie lifted his cap, which had fallen off at the first grip, and, while he was scrambling over the wall of the court into the "close," she drew the cap over his ears, saying, "You should aye keep on yer bannet, ma man—sheep's heads are best warm!" and, turning to the sergeant, she added, overcasting her thumb towards "Mr. Impidence," "He'll need the five shillings to get himsel' made richt, so tak' it. He'll no' be sae keen o' warin' crowns on kisses after this! 'Burnt bairns dread the fire!'"

Robert Easton's horse-racing adventure vexed his father, and was spoken of as a scandalous affair to occur in a seceder's family. The Rev. Mr. Morrison called to remonstrate with both father and son on the subject, but finding that the thing had been done against the father's wishes, — indeed, without his previous knowledge, — both proceeded to talk with Robert on the subject, who by this time was able to be in the dining-room.

Mr. Morrison began in his monotonous and verbose style: "It is with feelings of very considerable regret that I find myself under the painful necessity, Robert, of referring to a report which has reached me on indisputable authority; amounting, unfortunately, to a '*fama clamosa*,'—that means, a departure from the correct paths of duty so publicly made as to become a topic of general remark—and one which is, moreover, in itself, a grievous violation of the laws of the Christian denomination to which you belong. I refer, Robert, as you have doubtless already been led to infer from my introductory remarks, to a report, now in extensive circulation, that you deliberately and personally engaged in the debasing and scandalous practice of horse-racing; but before I further enter upon the task of laying before you the grave error which you have committed, I wish you to

tell me exactly all the circumstances, so that I may address my remarks to you with all the more directness."

Robert frankly told what had happened, used the same arguments as he had done at the mess table, and finished by saying, "I meant no harm, Mr. Morrison, and I see no harm in what I did; for if some yeomen canna ride express when needed, the corps is useless; an' if an opportunity is not given to test this, how can the officers know who can do it, or whae they can depend on?"

"But you raced for money, Robert," said his father.

"I did, and won it honestly. In fact, I am not without need of it, as you know, and, as far as it goes, it will so far save your purse. The very fact that prizes are offered, just proves that both officers and men see the thing to be necessary, and even 'the ladies' give a special prize."

This was a view of the subject that had not previously struck either Mr. Morrison or Mr. Easton; it had enough of plausibility in it to require a more active mind than either had, to meet Robert's arguments and questions. Mr. Morrison fell into one of his verbose and magniloquent perorations about "the possibility of circumstances arising in which

actions, that were generally and very properly stigmatized as sinful sports and pastimes, when they were entered upon and pursued merely for the gratification of idle curiosity,—even actions attended, as horse-racing was, by such dangerous and disgraceful surroundings as gambling, betting, frivolity, and debauchery,—might be entered into from higher motives. It depended entirely upon the object or objects, with a view to the accomplishment of which," etc.

But I spare my readers, for, when Mr. Morrison began a logical analysis, he was very long-winded, and after he had gone, Robert irreverently characterized this one as "a dictionary on the spree." The result was, that he did not absolutely condemn Robert's actions, because he had hardly sufficient time to think out and combat his puzzling questions.

"Do you say," asked Robert, "that it is not the duty of yeomanry officers to satisfy themselves, by actual experiment, that there's at least some in every 'troop' that could ride an express, or act cleverly as scouts or skirmishers? An' as far as I can see, they can only do that by having races; these are run on the 'flat,' and every horse must have gone through all the week's manœuvres before it is qualified for the race.

"Then," continued he, "is it not *as* necessary, that

the commanding officers should know what horses and men are really the best for service o' that kind? An' hoo can they get at that, exceptin' by havin' races, open to the whole regiment, to test the jumpin' powers o' the horses; for some horses may run well on the flat, that canna take a fence, or cross the country; an' for my part, I canna see ony ither way to make the corps effective, and prepared for every emergency, unless through the officers actually finding out, by *hurdle* races, whae they could depend on. It is certainly dangerous work both for man and horse, but it would become a matter of necessity in actual war, and unless the yeomanry are to be mere drawin'-room soldiers, or to leave themselves open to surprise or sudden attack, races are, in my opinion, as important a part o' our trainin' as ony ither; an' ye'll excuse me for thinkin' that them that discourages yeomanry races, and scandalizes them that's at the risk, an' trouble, an' expense, of keepin' horses, an' trainin' them for that purpose, either dinna ken what they're speakin' about, or meddle wi' things they hae naething to do wi'."

Mr. Morrison *fidged* a good deal in his chair while Robert was speaking, and fell to studying the cracks in the ceiling when he ceased. Mr. Easton looked at Mr. Morrison, but said nothing. Lily had risen to

leave the dining-room when Mr. Morrison came in, but as his was more a visit of inquiry than one of discipline, he asked her to remain. She had been an attentive listener up till now, at the same time busily working at her "company" needlework; but, seeing the old men silent, she said,

"Robert, Robert, these fine notions of yours never entered your head when you were preparing for the races. If I was sure that these were your reasons, or even your principal reasons, I would not have been so vexed as I am; but, Robert laddie, I fear it was partly diversion, partly pride, partly the value of the prizes, and largely lightheadedness, that tempted you to try racing. Even if it was all as you put it, it is not for you to begin such pranks, and certainly it is not for *you* to carry them on. You know better than I do what horse-racing leads to, and I hope, for all our sakes, that you will be honest with your own heart, and, as you have said you did it as a duty, think upon your duty to your father and mother, to the Church, and to everybody, and you will find that Malcolm Canmore should fill but a small corner in your mind. The most of those that begin horse-racing end badly. You have wet your feet in a dangerous river; do not go any deeper, for the stream is strong—too strong for you—step ashore and keep there."

Lily went to attend to her mother, and Mr. Morrison, on leaving, said, "Robert, you are in better hands than mine; your sister, although young in years, is old in wisdom, and strong in her love; be guided by her. You may safely trust in her. She will do you good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. Pray for grace to make her, and all your relatives, and all who know you, 'rejoice in time to come.'"

Lily asked Dr. Forrest to advise Robert never again to try horse-racing.

"I'm afraid," said he, "that I am 'tarred with the same stick,' for I am fond of horses, but I'll see." When he heard Robert's plausible reasoning, he said firmly, "Bob, it's all stuff and nonsense for you to speak that way. Riding 'expresses' on military service never entered your head; and your trying to make *that* out, convinces me that you are race-bitten. Robert, mark what I say,—if you go at it in that way, you will ruin yourself as a man. If you had frankly said that you liked the fun and the excitement, I would have believed you, but you are cheating yourself, and you are trying to cheat others with your high-flown rubbish. And—don't be angry with me—the poison of the 'blackleg' is already in you, and

it will utterly ruin you, as it has done thousands ; so, Robert, give over racing, once and for ever."

Lily and the doctor made more of Robert than the minister or his father had done. As Mr. Morrison returned to Blinkbonny in the evening, he met Nicol Fairbairn, who at once started the subject of "this scandalous horse-racing business o' young Easton's." Mr. Morrison began by telling him, that it was against his father's will and knowledge that the event had taken place, which drew from Nicol, "He must be a stubborn and rebellious son ; he would have been stoned to death under the old economy." But their conversation was too long and too involved for these "More Bits."

My readers will be better pleased to learn that Malcolm Canmore's fame brought not a few intending buyers to see him, and the good treatment which the horse had received, made him so nearly "warranted sound," that an offer, beyond Robert's original extreme figure, induced him to sell Malcolm ; "for," said he, "if he's worth that money, he's owre fine a horse for a poor farmer to keep, and owre great a risk for a young man to ride on ; an' the money will take me to New Zealand, where I have made up my mind for mony a day to gang, but never could see my road to the siller."

CHAPTER X.

THE TAILORS AT GIBBIESBRAE.

"Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny secure,
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short but simple annals of the poor."—*Gray.*

TAILORS in my younger days often went to their customers' houses to make or mend the clothes of the household. This peripatetic part of the trade was called "whippin' the cat,"—why, I cannot tell.

On a fine morning in the autumn of 1836, Strachan Gemmell, with a dingy shepherd's plaid round his neck and a staff in his hand, was striding along the Broomhill road, followed at a short distance by Big Murray, who carried a large smoothing-iron, better known as a "tailor's goose," under the one arm, and a piece of smooth tapered wood about a yard in length, called a lap-board or "la'brod," under the other.

Jamie's trousers were absurdly short for him, so were his coat-sleeves. At every step his head gave a

queer "jouk," possibly owing to the speed at which he was travelling. The old tailor was an exceedingly fast walker, had a light, stealthy step, and wore thin shoes, while Jamie's were like dredge boats for size, weighted with strong "cuddy heels," and bristling with heavy tackets. They were going to Gibbiesbrae, and a great day it was in the house when the tailors came to "whip the cat." The kitchen table was early cleared for them. Immediately on his arrival Strachan unswung his plaid, and produced out of its "neuk" a blue bag containing his scissors, a two-legged measuring-rule about eighteen inches long, which, when open, served as a square, a bag full of buttons, another containing thread, beeswax, needles, and thin pieces of pipeclay. These were deposited on the table, and after they had breakfasted on porridge and milk, followed by a "dish o' tea," the two fell to work about seven o'clock.

The measuring was a tedious affair for the young folks. They were set on the table or on a chair, and Strachan, with the web of homespun woollen cloth spread out at one end of the table, transferred each separate item to the cloth, and made his diagram on it, bit by bit, as he measured. Sad work it was to keep the children from turning round at every transfer of the measuring-tape to the web. The less

said of the fitting the better, or even of the *cut,* for all children's clothes were "made for their growth," and coat-sleeves and trouser-ends had to be worn with these rolled up an inch or two, for months after the clothes were new. I need not describe either the tailor's appearance or his work. His open vest, the bit of baize floating from it, stuck full of needles and pins, the dark steel thimble without a top, the feat of taking two stitches at a time, and even three, followed by an extra jerk, the "tuts tuts" when the thread broke, his sage and contemplative look when pressing the seams under the "goose," the crude way of trying whether the iron was hot enough, the consideration required to "hain the claith,"—who has not seen these, and the other mysteries of clothing craft?

The farmer of Gibbiesbrae, Hugh Easton, was a son of Mr. Easton of "The Mains." He had a large family of children; the first five of these were boys, and the tailors spent four days, cross-legged, on the kitchen table, in making or mending for "the maister and the callants."

Mrs. Easton of Gibbiesbrae was an active, managing woman, and made a good farmer's wife, although she had been brought up in Larkton, and still retained some of the "gentiness" of a town-bred body. After

the birth of her third son she found it necessary to get somebody to look after the children, and Annie Rankine, whom my readers heard of at Jamie Dunbar the carrier's, was taken into the house for that purpose.

Annie had known nothing but hard work all her life, principally amongst children, for she was the third of nine and the first girl. Since she was five years of age, she had been more of a "wee wifie" than a girl, and when she became Mrs. Easton's "lassie for keepin' the bairns," she entered on familiar and congenial work. Her charge consisted of Allan, aged three, Hugh, aged eighteen months, and occasionally, baby Samuel. Allan could walk, and generally had to do so; Hugh was advancing from creeping to an unsteady sort of stumping, which generally ended in his plumping down rather than falling forward.

When Annie carried him, her spare figure seemed to be at a dangerous angle, and she had to strain her arms to gather him up on her knee on the "nursing-chair," although it was lower than ordinary chairs. It had, besides, a cushioned seat, much indented, moveable and loose, requiring some skill to keep it from falling out, when the wee wifie lifted the chair with one hand, while carrying a child on her other arm.

Big Murray knew Annie, and liked her for Willie's sake, and Gibbiesbrae was his favourite "whip-the-cat" house. At meal-times, the great subject of conversation this year was Robert Easton's going to New Zealand, and, although the young tailor seldom spoke before his seniors, he was so struck with the description of New Zealand that he asked Mr. Easton if it was far away.

"It is on the other side o' the world a'thegither," replied Mr. Easton. "You know that the world's round, and if ye could bore a hole right through the centre of it, the end o' the auger would come out about New Zealand."

"Mr. Torrance used to tell us that the world was round," said Jamie; "but I never could see through that, for its middlin' flat a' places I've seen; an' lookin' at the hills, that's round maist o' places, it's mair like hollow than round."

"It's *round* for a' that, Jamie," said Mr. Easton; "sailors have sailed round it, an' landed in the same bit. It's like this;" and, taking a piece of the tailor's chalk, he drew a circle on the floor, with a rude representation of a man walking on the top, and another with his feet to the circle, and his head, of course, hanging down, at the bottom. "This," said he, pointing to the walking one "is Scotland, where

we are;" then, pointing to the other, "this is New Zealand."

"But he's upside down," said Jamie in amazement; "his *feet's* p'intin' to the ither man's *feet;* he'll fa' aff, he'll never stick on, an' he'll never daur move;" and although Mr. Easton did his best to explain the matter, Jamie was completely bamboozled; so, indeed, was Strachan, who was, however, wise enough to keep quiet; but meal-time was past, and as the tailors rose to work, Big Murray said with a sigh, "I'm awfu' sorry for Maister Robert; he'll never get the length o' New Zealand; he's sure to fa' aff half way into, *dear kens whaur;* an' even if he got there, he never could stick on—at least I couldna stick for five minutes; but I'll never try't, catch me—catch me gaun to whaur a body wad hae to walk upside down."

Gibbiesbrae belonged to the Misses Somerville of Fillies' Den, or the "Den," as the house was called, and their nephew, Hector M'Lean, who had just returned from the West Indies, was paying them a visit. He was accompanied by a negro servant, a tall, rough-featured, very black man, who went by the name of Mr. Sambo. On the morning after his arrival he complained bitterly of feeling cold. The butler at the Den advised him to get a warm coat made, and, knowing that the tailor was at Gibbiesbrae, directed him to

the place. Jamie was leaning against the gable of the barn, when he heard a voice in the front say, "I have come from the Den;" he looked round, Sambo looked round at the same time, but the moment Jamie saw the negro's face, he drew back in mortal terror, and, with stealthy, cat-like steps, slipped into the most concealed part of the stackyard and stood there, trembling.

Nearly half an hour elapsed before he dared venture forth, and when he did so, the "joukin'" of his head was excessive, and the careful tiptoe-quietness of his step was a study. He was too old for Strachan to punish him now, as he did before, but Jamie's absence had excited the tailor's wrath, and, as soon as he came in, Strachan lifted the lapboard, gave him a firm stroke with its flat side, and ordered him to "be off to Fillies' Den for some cloth that the butler will gie ye; an' if Mrs. Easton will oblige ye wi' a towel, wash yersel' weel in the dookin' pool, so as to be clean an' wise-like when ye gang to a genteel house like that."

Jamie gladly obeyed, for he needed a walk to soothe his nerves; he had perspired so profusely with terror, and the day was such a hot one, that, although he did not think of it before, a "dook" was the very thing. The bathing-place in the Fillies' Den was a deep pool, into which projected a penin-

sular rock. On the upper side of this projection the water was deep; on the under side, it got gradually shallower towards the place where the stream issued from it; and those undressing on the one side of the rock, could not see what was going on at the other.

The clear water and the broiling day had made Mr. Sambo forget his morning's complaint of feeling cold, and, as he was fond of bathing, and a good swimmer, he was in the water when Jamie entered it. Jamie heard him plunge into the "deep pool," and it comforted him to think that there was "somebody else near him if onything happened." He heard besides the blowing of a powerful swimmer, and concluded that it would be Willie Fairbairn, the best swimmer in Blinkbonny. He was anxiously waiting to see Willie turn the rock, when, to Jamie's indescribable horror, the face of the big, lusty negro, with its white rolling eyes, thick red lips, and gleaming teeth, came quickly towards him. He stumbled overhead with the fright, scrambled wildly to the shore, took to the woods, *as he was*, and stood shivering there for nearly half an hour. Then he cautiously peeped from behind a tree, and crept forwards from one to another, till he reached the open, grassy bank; and, after a very careful survey, he made one bold breakneck dash for his clothes, huddled them together in his arms, and fled

back into the woods, where, while dressing, he muttered to himself, "I thocht the water was warm the day; but nae wonder; it was a' fizzin' round yon fearsome-lookin' monster."

Jamie, a sorely perplexed and terrified young man, was compelled to screw up what little courage was left in him, to proceed on his errand to the butler at Fillies' Den House. After knocking at the outer kitchen door and receiving no answer, he ventured along the lobby, where, hearing sounds as of butlery proceeding from a room, he knocked timidly at the door, and was told to come in.

Mr. Sambo was its only occupant. He had stripped off his coat and vest, tucked up his shirt sleeves, and was sharpening a large carving-knife when he heard the rap. Before Jamie got into the room, the negro had turned round to face the door, and was holding up the carving-knife and trying its edge with his thumb. This third apparition completely unhinged Jamie; he could neither run, cry, nor faint. Luckily his friend, the butler, "that kent me," entered at the time, and, guessing the cause of Jamie's terror, explained that this was young Mr. M'Lean's servant, and introduced them to each other. Not even holding up his hand for Mr. Torrance's palmies was half such a great trial, as for Jamie to compel his hand to

shake Mr. Sambo's, for the negro laughed pleasantly, which, in Jamie's opinion, only made his eyes more terrible, and his opener mouth and gleaming teeth more fiend-like. Luckily the negro had laid down the knife. Big Murray was thankful to get away with the bundle of cloth, and, greatly relieved in mind, had gone a few yards on the way back to Gibbiesbrae, when, for the first time in his life, he saw a peacock, in all the glory of its splendid tail. He stood riveted to the spot for some time,—walked round the lovely bird, which kept facing him,—looked, and grinned with delight—opened his eyes wider, and looked again. In fact, he stood for fully an hour, and by the time he got back to Gibbiesbrae, the gorgeous peacock had fairly supplanted the dreadful phantom that the negro had left in Jamie's brain. Jamie said nothing about skulking into the stackyard when he heard "the *thing* say that it came from the Den," and nothing about his companion of the bath, but he told with pride that he had "shaken hands wi' the awfu' fearsome-lookin' black man, that young Maister M'Lean brocht frae some place they ca'd the West Engines;" and that he had seen "the bonniest bird ever was seen in a' the world, wi' a tail like a fan-tailed doo's, but the bonniest colours an' the bonniest spots on't that ever was seen,—they were like

big blue een (eyes), an' gold round them, an' it had a blue neck, wi' a wee cockit hat on't like the birse on a yeomanryman's helmet."

"It has been the peacock," said Mrs. Easton; "it's a pity but what its voice was as bonny as its head or its tail, for it gies an eerie, ugly skraigh that I like waur than a hoolet's 'hoolety-hoo.'"

Jamie Murray, when he had a few minutes to himself, generally spent them in Mrs. Rankine's. On his second day at Gibbiesbrae, he dropped in at his dinner hour, produced, to Mrs. Rankine's surprise, his needle and thread, called one of her children to him, did a little needful mending, and asked Mrs. Rankine if there was any other little thing he could do for her in that way.

There was generally a good deal of such work to be done, for, although she was a clever body, she had not much time to be particular about mending neatly; so, after this, every spare minute Jamie got as a mealtime, or a rest, he spent at Mrs. Rankine's, and when there, wrought even harder than he did at Gibbiesbrae.

The peacock was a great subject of conversation, and Mrs. Rankine gave him a peacock's feather home with him, which, because it would divert "wee Strachan," greatly delighted Jamie. She also told him that Annie's younger sister was going to Gibbies-

brae "to take care of Mrs. Easton's bairns, for Annie was big enough for a "place" now, and that she was going to be a servant to Miss Martin at Larkton, after she was married. On the finishing day of "whippin' the cat" at Gibbiesbrae, Mrs. Rankine gave Jamie six duck eggs for his mother, "or wee Strachan," added Jamie.

The peacock's feather had been a source of immense delight to the poor silly boy, and when the eggs appeared, Tibbie was so astonished at their size that she declared "they were like soda-water bottles, and that it was almost a pity to boil a hale yin a' at yince, but she didna weel see hoo she could halve 't, so wee Tibbie would get a bit;" for none of the elder ones would have tasted them if the little folks could eat them, and this they did, and that heartily.

Jamie resolved that, on the next King's Birthday, which was a regular holiday in Blinkbonny, he would "gie Mrs. Rankine a day's sewing;" and when he told her this, she asked him to bring "wee Strachan" with him. This went closer to Jamie's heart than almost anything else could have done, and the twenty-first day of August was eagerly looked forward to. It was a glorious day; Jamie carried the "wee laddie" on his back, or in his bosom, the greater part of the way, and put him into the hands of the little Rankines, who

showed him the cattle, and especially the pigs and the hens. Jamie himself worked like a slave all day, only occasionally looking out at the window, or stepping into the stackyard to see how "wee Strachan" was getting on. The child was happy, happy; this made all about him happy too, and the visit was often referred to in the tailor's kitchen at Blinkbonny, for the poor child was every now and again imitating, or recalling in his wandering way, the sights and sounds of his first holiday at Gibbiesbrae.

Often on my Sabbath morning walk, have I seen the big, overgrown young tailor carrying his little half-witted brother to the top of the Annie Green Brae, to let him see the meal mill that lay in the hollow, fondling him with an almost infinite tenderness, interpreting his signs, humouring his whims, and becoming a very child in his intense sympathy.

He once said to me, as we stood together on a lovely Sabbath morning, "Strachan doesna like the mill through the week; I think it's owre noisy for him, an' there's nae water rinnin' owre the damhead or down out o' the trows, but on the Sabbath mornin', when a's quiet, he likes awfu' weel to see't; an' isn't it real bonnie, the tum'lin' water glintin' in the sun?—ye baith see't an' hear't. It's just a pictur'; he's never tired o't—neither am I."

THE "ANNIE" MILL, *SABBATH MORNING.*

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Mrs. Rankine greatly valued Jamie's help with the children's clothes. Adam, her husband, had very small wages, which had to keep two grown-up people and six children, besides helping a little the three who were working, in a sort of a way, for themselves,—Willie, by doing his washing, and paying threepence a month for its carriage; Adam, who herded on Mr. Easton's farm; and Annie, the kind little nurse of the healthy children of the farmer of Gibbiesbrae.

The Rankines' house was a small, low-roofed, thatched cottage which almost formed a part of the homestead. It had two small ends, a but and a ben. In the kitchen end were two box beds, and under one of these there was a frame on castors, which was drawn out at night to form a third bed. There was also a bed in the ben end, but it was used only in very warm weather, or by the elder children on an occasional visit. It was a store, a workshop, and many other things. Adam Rankine's wages were mostly paid in *kind*, in meal, potatoes, coals, and a small quantity of salt meat; the money part of his yearly income never exceeded sixteen pounds, and it required the most rigid economy, as well as constant, untiring industry on Mrs. Rankine's part, to provide, in the plainest way possible, for the wants of the household.

She was an active, kindly-faced, bonnie body, wiry and handy. From five o'clock in the morning till ten o'clock at night, she was never idle, and certainly never out of work, for she was particular about having her children clean, and their clothes as neat as lay in her power; she also made a great effort to give them as good an education as she could afford. All day long she toiled without ceasing, and to get a quiet hour in the evening at their clothing, she commenced early to put them to bed. This had to be done quickly, and she had little time to "hush" any of them. They were smartly stripped, night-gowned, and tumbled one by one into the box bed; sometimes there was a mixed chorus of four or five little laughing or crying voices, but they had just to laugh or cry themselves asleep; after which they were "happit" with motherly tenderness, and she was busy with her needle, her wheel, or her smoothing-iron.

Providing boots and shoes was the great problem of her yearly budget, pressing itself forwards from Spring till gurly October. About the end of April, the shoes of the little ones were greased and laid aside, those of the elder ones were only used for church-going purposes, and during the summer and autumn months the Rankines went like "Jenny Nettles," "trippin' lichtly barefoot."

The harvest season fifty years ago was much longer than it is now, since reaping, raking, and binding machines, drawn by horses, are so common, and do their work so quickly. Mrs. Rankine "shore a' hairst," and the money thus earned was the "head-sheaf" of the shoe money. The children gleaned, and the armfuls of "singles" which they brought in helped a little; the eggs which her ducks and hens laid, and the spring chickens and ducklings which she so successfully reared, and which Jamie Dunbar the carrier said were the best in the kingdom, were generally converted into money, which all went into the "stockin' fit" purse, to await investment in the "shoe market."

Twice an addition to her family had occurred during harvest; and when confined to bed, she was greatly exercised as to how she could either get last year's shoes to serve through the coming winter, or find money to buy new ones. But, though often perplexed, she was never in despair, for, besides her other good qualities, she had a simple faith in Him who has said, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?" And hers was a practical piety, which gathered up the fragments, so that nothing was lost; and often in the middle of her great thoughts of

heart, she quickened herself by saying, "We hae the promise that our bread shall be given us, and our water shall be sure, and we've aye gotten't yet; an' He'll no' fail o' His word, for He that is sae kind to His birds will never forget His bairns."

One year there had been illness among her children, and Adam himself had been "laid up." Dr. Stevenson, as kind a man as ever breathed, was in daily attendance at the Rankines' for a considerable time; and when the invalids were better, Mrs. Rankine asked him to send in his account, for "although she couldna maybe just pay't a' at ance, she would like to ken how much it was, an' she would do her best." The doctor knew the family's circumstances well, and would rather have given them something than made any charge; but he could not afford to do this, for no man in the county wrought so hard and earned so little as this king of men. To any one in fair circumstances, ten pounds would have been a moderate charge, but it took him some time before he could even make up his mind to render Mrs. Rankine a bill for ten shillings.

She knew, and with tears in her eyes told him, that "ten shillings wadna quarter pay him for a' his kindness;" but she gathered them as quickly as she could, shilling by shilling,—the last one was

specially reluctant to come in,—and went with the money to the doctor, who gave her a shilling back. She gazed first at the shilling, then so full-heartedly at the doctor that he could not return her look, and said, "Oh, sir, if I had kent that ye wad a' gi'en me a shillin' back, I would hae been here a month ago; for the medicines an' things that I've had to get had ta'en nearly a' I had laid past; but I canna tak' this shillin', doctor, for it's yours, an' mair if I had it to gie."

He clapped her kindly on the shoulder, and said, "Buy some arrowroot with it, and tell the bairns that it is a present from me."

Mrs. Rankine shed a tear of gratitude in the doctor's lobby; Dr. Stevenson gave a peculiar gulp in his surgery, as he heard the door close after her, and said, "A woman among ten thousand," a thrifty wifie; I never enter the Rankines' door without being reminded of Burns' "Cottar's Saturday Night."

"November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh,
The shortening winter day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The blackening trains o' craws to their repose.
The toil-worn Cottar frae his labour goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor his course does hameward bend.

" At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an agèd tree ;
The expectant wee-things, toddlin', stacher through
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise an' glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinking bonnily,
His clean hearthstane, his thriftie wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

" Belyve the elder bairns come drapping in,
At service out, amang the farmers roun',
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neebor town :
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps, to show a braw new gown,
Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

" Wi' joy unfeigned brothers and sisters meet,
An' each for other's weelfare kindly spiers :
The social hours, swift-winged, unnoticed fleet ;
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears :
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years ;
Anticipation forward points the view.
The mother, wi' her needle an' her shears,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new ;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

" Their masters' an' their mistresses' command,
The younkers a' are warnèd to obey ;
An' mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
An' ne'er, though out o' sight, to jauk or play :
'An' O ! be sure to fear the Lord alway !
An' mind your duty duly, morn an' night !
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might :
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright ! ' "

CHAPTER XI.

MAGGIE'S MARRIAGE.

"Bonny lass, I love thee well,
Bonny lad, I love thee better.
Wilt thou pull off thy hose and shoon
And wend with me to the Liggan Water?"

THERE was no penny post fifty years ago; the charges for conveyance of letters by the post varied according to distance, and the average price was nearer a shilling than a penny, but this did not seem to prevent Mr. M'Nab writing often to my sister Maggie. I was not allowed to read the letters, but I learned that he was well, and that, as far as he knew, the plant of forget-me-not was thriving in his father's garden. One letter, however, I was allowed to read; it had been "franked,"—that is, initialed outside by a member of Parliament, and letters bearing such marks were free from any postal charge. Envelopes were not used then, letters were folded, "inclasped," and generally sealed with a wafer. Must I explain

what a wafer is? That is not easily done, but as I never see them nowadays, I may say that they were little round dry things about the size and thickness of a threepenny piece, which, when slightly wetted, retained their shape, and were slipped between the two outer flaps of a letter; they were then pressed down with a seal, not infrequently with a thimble; when dry they became hard and bound the "flaps" firmly together.

Mr. M'Nab's letter, however, had a large red seal on it with a heraldic device and a Latin motto, the crest of the member of Parliament who had franked it. It was written in high spirits, and principally taken up with the announcement of his having received a presentation to a nice parish church, from the honourable gentleman whose crest it bore. My readers will quite understand *why* I cannot give its name, or indicate its locality more nearly, than by saying that it was on the north side of the Forth, and abutted on the sea. The letter also contained references to his hoping to be present at Maggie's marriage, with a sprig of forget-me-not in his coat. He also sent kind regards to all his Blinkbonny friends, not forgetting the good folks at Greenknowe.

Mrs. Easton of the Mains had so far recovered

from her illness, as to admit of Lily Easton's acting as Maggie's bridesmaid; but on the week before the marriage, Lord Dunsarg had desired John M'Lauchlan to go to the Highlands, to survey and report upon an estate which was shortly to be sold, and he wished him to start next day. The distance was such that, had he gone, the marriage must have been postponed, but it was only after a good deal of humming and hawing, that John mustered courage to state this dilemma to his lordship.

"Going to be married next week!" said Lord Dunsarg; "postpone the marriage! Not at all—that would never do. Your *brother* is not going to be married, is he? He must go; it would be rather hard to postpone a marriage, but time presses me as well as you, so please arrange for your brother to start to-morrow. Ask him, please, to call for me this afternoon."

John was in a fix. "How would George take this losing of the fun of the wedding?" He took it as a sensible, pushing young engineer should have done, and was delighted to get a trip to the Highlands, which so happily combined profit, pleasure, and promotion, for he was younger than John. He was at Lord Dunsarg's at the hour named; felt an inch taller than ever he had done; got his instructions;

asked some very pertinent questions, which gratified Lord Dunsarg, and, on his return home said to John, "All right, John; I would have enjoyed the marriage very much, but business is business, and Lord Dunsarg is Lord Dunsarg. Remember me to Maggie; tell her I am very sorry—no, don't say that—say—say what you like."

John thought that George was *fully* an inch taller than he had been the day before, for the "man" was working in him, and he felt proud and strong at this

> "Tide in the affairs of men,
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

And he breasted it well,—so well that Lord Dunsarg congratulated him on "having won his spurs," and being now quite able to tilt with his brother.

John M'Lauchlan found a groomsman in Dr. Forrest, and a heartier fellow for that post could not have been wished; his exuberant, rattling glee communicated itself to the marriage-party, and to none more than to Lily Easton and Mr. M'Nab.

After the ceremony had been performed by the Rev. Mr. Barrie, and the bridescake cut up, the company got heartier, and well intermixed. Miss Park, an elderly maiden lady, got *the ring*, John M'Nab got *the thimble*, and Mary Stewart *the button*.

Lily Easton's dress suited her admirably, and brought out her handsome figure; her dark eyes sparkled as she pinned the marriage favours on the guests, and the merry ripple of her sweet voice provoked many an amusing sally, for she had something appropriate and hearty to say to every one she decorated.

The arrangements of "Who was to take who" down to dinner had required some consideration; our principal difficulty was with Miss Park, who, although a very old friend of the family, and a most excellent person, was also very correct, precise, and severe. After much consideration we were forced to assign her to a worthy bachelor uncle, who was as blunt and homespun as she was "pernickety," but we could not make a better of it.

When Uncle Gilbert was told that Miss Park was to be his partner at dinner, he was greatly pleased, but expressed himself rather loudly when he told her this.

"So, Miss Park, you're gaun to be my neighbour at the dinner. It's mony a lang day since we first kent ane anither. Let me see, I'se warrant it's mair than fifty years, but ye wear weel; in fac', ye look about as young as the bride hersel', an' they tell me that ye've gotten the ring. There's nae sayin' but ye may

be the first married amang us wanters after a'. There's nae doubt o' this, that ye just haena been able to get yer *ain* consent yet, an' till a body gets that, they canna gied to ony ither body."

Miss Park's face varied in expression while my uncle was speaking, but it rose from "change" to "fair," almost to "set fair," before he was done. She had been residing for the past six weeks in Edinburgh; and, while there, had been so rejuvenated by the dentist, that, on her return, her greatly improved appearance was the subject of general remark. She was one of those folks whose age might be guessed at anything between thirty and sixty, according to the time of the day she was seen, or the dress she wore. She looked oldest in her Sunday bonnet, for it was of an out-of-date fashion; but when got up for an occasion she was so bright, so nimble, and so neat, that she readily passed for a "middle-aged lady."

"Noo, when I look at ye again, Miss Park," continued my uncle, after staring more intently than politely, at her suspiciously regular, pearly teeth, "I'm surprised at your teeth being so perfect; they're like a lassie's o' fifteen; ane would almost think that you had ta'en them out every nicht an'"—

Luckily Mary Stewart overheard these words, and, fearing that uncle might go too far, she asked him to

stand up to get his marriage favour more neatly put on.

Uncle's remark, while being thus smartened, put Miss Park into excellent humour; for, glancing from Mary Stewart to her, he said, "Upon my word, ye're a' sic bonnie lassies here, that it's no' safe for an auld bachelor to be amang ye; I'll be dreamin' about ye a' nicht, Miss Park."

After dinner there was the usual drinking of toasts, and the speeches were short and hearty. John M'Nab proposed the bridesmaid; and Dr. Forrest replied with a good deal of rattle, but a good deal of feeling too. Indeed, he was less brilliant than we expected; there was a depth in his words, and an honesty about his compliments and expressions, very different from the offhand, flowery, overdone tall-talk usually uttered on such occasions. So generally was this felt, that Uncle Gilbert said, as the doctor sat down, "Haith! ma man, ye're biddin' fair to be married sune yersel'; when ye began I had mind o' the auld sayin', 'When the pat's fu' it'll boil owre;' but or ye were dune, I minded the ither proverb, 'When the heart's fu', the tongue canna speak;' for onybody micht 'ken by your half tale, what your hale tale means.'"

I wished to get a song from Mr. M'Nab, for I had

heard him sing well in our student days; but I was afraid that, being now a licensed minister, he might not care to do it. I hinted this to the Rev. Mr. Barrie, who quickly took speech in hand.

"If you have been in the habit of singing, Mr. M'Nab," said he, "do not give it up. There are expressions in our Scotch songs that may be made powerful instruments for good. Were it not that some worthy people might be offended, I would often quote them in the pulpit. The sentiments contained in many of them are precious and suggestive; for instance, 'There's nae luck about the house' is brimful of meaning. What could beat 'And are ye sure he's weel?' or,

> 'His very fit has music in't,
> When he comes up the stair;'

or his wife's anxiety to make herself and 'Ilka thing look braw,' 'a' to pleasure my guidman;' or her hasty orders about not *one*, but '*twa* fat hens, that Colin weel may fare.'"

"Grand, Mr. Barrie," said my uncle; "that's as gude as a sermon ony day."

"Then," continued Mr. Barrie, "the delightful picture of home life in 'John Anderson, my joe,'—

> 'John Anderson, my joe, John,
> We clamb the hill thegither;
> An' monie a canty day, John,
> We've had wi' ane anither.

'Now we maun totter down, John,
But hand in hand we'll go;
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson, my joe.'

I know nothing more effective that I could say to any young married couple, than to keep that picture before them."

"Nothing," said my uncle,—"nothing, Mr. Barrie, for there's mair than warld's gude meant in

'Blessin's on yer frosty pow,
John Anderson, my joe.'"

"Then 'The boatie rows,'" continued Mr. Barrie, "carefully looked at, is really a homely prayer.

'Oh, weel may the boatie row
That wins the bairnies' bread.'

'The *bairnies*' bread;' how touching!"

"Uncommon a' thegither," said my uncle; "an' that bit about

'An' muckle lighter is the lade,
When love bears up the creel.

An' the hin'most verse is that nat'ral,

'And when wi' age we're worn down,
And hirplin' round the door,
They'll row to keep us hale and warm
As we did them afore.'"

"Then," continued Mr. Barrie, "there's Lady Nairne's 'Land o' the leal'—a treasury of comfort and a picture of the land beyond, unequalled, in my opinion, by any other. It soars into the land of the living,

that lies beyond the land of the dead. It means the land of the loyal, the land of the true-hearted; for 'leal' is just the Scotch for loyal. And how gloriously does it work out this idea in simple words:

> 'There's nae sorrow there, John,
> There's naither cauld nor care, John,
> The day is aye fair
> In the land o' the leal.'

I have heard it told," continued Mr. Barrie, "that when the late Dr. David Dickson of Edinburgh lost a sweet little girl, he sang 'The land o' the leal' at family worship. The picture of the 'day's aye fair' became to him so real, that he said, after the exercises were over, 'It's a pity but what that was among the paraphrases! Since I have thought more of "Our bonnie bairnie's being there," I must say that I cannot sing so heartily,

> "And oh! we grudged her sair,
> To the land o' the leal;"

for she's safe and happy in the land of "nae sorrow," "neither cauld nor care," "aye fair," in the land of the loyal and the true-hearted.'"

"It's maist beautifu'," said my uncle; "but I for ordinar' hear folk sayin' 'Jean,' no 'John.'"

"Lady Nairne's original version gives 'John;' either will do; but I must apologize for having been led into a long lecture on Scotch songs."

"An' ye never had a better text," said my uncle.

"Thank you, Mr. Martin. My object was to get my young friend Mr. M'Nab to keep up his singing, and his singing of hearty songs too. A minister's day is often a mixed one: visiting the sick in the forenoon; officiating at a funeral in a sorely bereaved household in the afternoon; marrying a couple, and rejoicing with them that rejoice in the evening. We need, Mr. M'Nab, to have some light fare to *re*-create the power of study and composition; and we may often find that in the songs and ballads of our native land."

Mr. M'Nab, thus encouraged, sang with great spirit Tannahill's song,—

"OH, ROW THEE IN MY HIGHLAND PLAID!

"Lowland lassie, wilt thou go
Where the hills are clad with snow;
Where, beneath the icy steep,
The hardy shepherd tends his sheep?
Ill nor wae shall thee betide,
When row'd within my Highland plaid.

"Soon the voice of cheery spring
Will gar a' our plantin's ring,
Soon our bonny heather braes
Will put on their summer claes;
On the mountain's sunny side,
We'll lean us on my Highland plaid.

"When the summer spreads the flowers,
Busks the glens in leafy bowers,
Then we'll seek the caller shade,
Lean us on the primrose bed;
While the burning hours preside,
I'll screen thee wi' my Highland plaid.

"Then we'll leave the sheep and goat,
I will launch the bonny boat,
Skim the loch in canty glee,
Rest the oars to pleasure thee;
When chill breezes sweep the tide,
I'll hap thee wi' my Highland plaid.

"Lowland lads may dress mair fine,
Woo in words mair saft than mine;
Lowland lads hae mair of art,
A' my boast's an honest heart.
Whilk shall ever be my pride;—
Oh, row thee in my Highland plaid!

"'Bonny lad, ye've been sae leal,
My heart would break at our fareweel;
Lang your love has made me fain;
Take me—take me for your ain!'
Across the Firth away they glide,
Young Donald and his Lowland bride."

Whether Lily Easton had told Dr. Forrest about the forget-me-not, and Mr. M'Nab's being about to be settled north of the Forth, I cannot tell, but he rose to his feet and said, "That song seems to me to be incomplete. The couple go away, but we hear nothing about the home-coming. For want of a better, how would this hurriedly put together jingle of mine do as a last verse?" and, imitating a man playing on the bagpipes, by dwelling in a long, chanter-like drone on the last word of each verse, he sang,—

"Hark! the bagpipes' cheery hum!
Hark the clansmen cry—they come!
Welcome to your Highland hame!
Welcome, Donald, back again!
Welcome thou, our flower and pride,
Our Donald's bonnie Lowland bride."

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NORTH OF THE FORTH

The young doctor had never appeared as a poet or a singer before, but this hearty verse, merrily sung, was so persistently encored that he was prevailed on to sing again. This time it was a Latin version of "Green grow the rashes, O!" which my uncle declared "he could follow fine, for it was the same tune," and while the doctor sang it in Latin, many of us joined in the chorus in Scotch. The translation is by Mahoney, better known as "Father Prout," and may interest Latin scholars.

"VIRENT ARUNDINES.

Air—Green grow the rashes, O

"Curæ corrodunt Urbem, Rus,
Et sapientûm cellulas,
Nec vitâ vellem frui plus
Nî foret ob puellulas—
Virent arundines!
At me tenellulas
Tædet horarum nisi queis
Inter fui puellulas!

"Divitias avaro dem,
Insudet auri cumulo,
Quærat quocumque modo rem,
Inops abibit tumulo.
Virent arundines!
At me tenellulas
Tædet horarum nisi queis
Inter fui puellulas!

"Cùm Sol obscurat spicula,
Stringente, fit, amiculâ,
Mî, brachio tunc niveo,
Rerum dulcis oblivio!

Virent arundines!
At me tenellulas
Tædet horarum nisi queis
Inter fui puellulas!

"Nam dicos contrà? canum grex!
An fuit vir sagacior
Quàm Solomon? aut unquam rex
In virgines salacior?
Virent arundines!
At me tenellulas
Tædet horarum nisi queis
Inter fui puellulas!

"Quas cum de terræ vasculo
Natura finxit bellulas,
Tentavit manum masculo
Formavit tunc puellulas.
Virent arundines!
At me tenellulas,
Tædet horarum nisi queis
Inter fui puellulas!"

My uncle had to propose "the ladies," and he did it heartily; his best hits were, "Maidens want naething but a man, and after that they want *a'thing;* an' what beats me is this, that if a' lasses are as gude as they're ca'd afore they're married, whaur do the ill wives come frae? The ladies, my friends, are the 'boys' for keepin' us a' richt; an' I am fair bamboozled among sae mony nice anes the day. I'm like the man in the auld ballant about Bessie Bell and Mary Gray;" and, nodding from Miss Park to Miss Stewart, he sang,—

"Fair Bessy Bell I lo'ed yestreen,
And thought I ne'er would alter;
But Mary Gray's twa pawky e'en,
Garred a' my fancy falter.

"Dear Bessy Bell and Mary Gray,
Ye unco sair oppress us;
Our fancies jee between ye twa,
Ye are sic bonnie lasses.

"Wae's me! for baith I canna get,
To ane by law we're stinted;
Then I'll draw cuts and take my fate,
And be with ane contented."

"But," continued he, "maybe nane o' ye wad tak' me, for 'Better rue sit than rue flit,' so, as the auld sang says, 'here's a health to all good lasses.'"

Mr. M'Nab replied neatly and feelingly, all the more so that Miss Stewart was his partner at table.

"Sentiments" were common in these days, and every one at the table was asked to sing, or to give a sentiment. Amongst those given, Miss Park's were, "May all our enjoyments bear reflection," and "The rose hath its thorns, the diamond its specks, and the best man his failings;" Miss Stewart gave "Hearts and Homes," Lily Easton "Health, wealth, and wit to guide them;" Uncle Gilbert's were, "The single married, an' the married happy, specially them that hae maist need o' happiness," and "Absent friends." He could not be induced to sing any of his very old songs, for

he had learned James Hogg's "*When the kye come hame,*" but he sang it, giving great expression to the lines,—

"When the blewart bears a pearl,
And the daisy turns a pea,
And the bonnie lucken gowan
Has fauldet up her e'e,
Then the laverock frae the blue lift,
Doops down and thinks nae shame
To woo his bonnie lassie,
When the kye comes hame.
When the kye comes hame,
When the kye comes hame,
'Tween the gloamin' and the mirk,
When the kye comes hame."

The happy couple left us, about six o'clock, in a post-chaise with a postilion, a manner of driving rarely seen now a days ; and shortly afterwards the party broke up, for the death of my father had occurred such a short time before, that we judged it better not to have any dancing ; besides, Maggie was off, and the house had no mistress excepting Peggy Ritchie, my housekeeper, general servant, and an important factor in domestic Blinkbonny. Mrs. Barrie's "Bell" helped Peggy on this occasion, but she did not quite like some of Bell's remarks about "wasterfu'ness" and "thowlessness," possibly because they were only too true.

Miss Park chanced to mention that her nephew, Mr. James, was spending a few days with her, and

just as Miss Stewart's hackney carriage was announced, she invited him to join a few young friends whom she expected, next evening, at Greenknowe.

Lily Easton and Miss Stewart stayed to tea, and shortly thereafter they went away, the one convoyed by Dr. Forrest, the other by Mr. M'Nab. All landed at Greenknowe, and were sitting at the open drawing-room window, when Mr. James Park walked up the avenue. James was a very nice lad, very correct and nervously polite,—almost painfully so, for he was as precise at seventeen as his aunt was at ——, and it sat badly on such young shoulders. This may have originated the diminutive name "Jimsie," by which he was best known in Blinkbonny.

"Jimsie" came opposite the window, made a most graceful bow, hoped that Mrs. Stewart and the young ladies were well, said that his aunt wished him to take "Tousie" (her panting Skye-terrier) out for a walk, and to call to say that he had great pleasure in accepting Mrs. and the Misses Stewart's kind invitation for to-morrow night; and to inquire whether the party was to be a large one — a full-dress one? or— Here he hesitated a little, looked down, seized his nether garments, pulled the sides of them out as wide as they would stretch—exactly as his aunt extended the sides of her dress when making her most

formal curtsey—and, looking at them, then at Miss Stewart, then at them again, he asked, "Will these trousers do?"

Dr. Forrest rolled off his chair, the others disappeared as quickly as their laughter would allow them; Miss Stewart experienced very great difficulty in keeping her gravity long enough to say, "Perfectly, Mr. James; it is just an easy gathering of a few friends. Won't you come in?"

"No, thank you," replied Jimsie; "Tousie is getting impatient. Kindly remember me to Mrs. Stewart and Miss Agnes." He then made a most polite bow and walked off, after jerking himself into "correct deportment" walking position. It was hardly necessary for Jimsie to ask to be remembered to Mrs. Stewart and Miss Agnes, for, when Miss Stewart came to deliver the message, all in the drawing-room had laughed so heartily as to have good cause to remember him. Dr. Forrest saw to that, for he was ever and anon repeating Jimsie's *pantomime* and question, "Will these—do?" And when Lily Easton told her brothers at home, they very improperly retold it in Scotch, and questions or references as to suitability of dress were, and still are, put by some of the Blinkbonny folks in two words, "Jimsie Park."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PICNIC.

" Round the sylvan fairy nooks,
Feath'ry breckans fringe the rocks,
'Neath the brae the burnie jouks,
An' ilka thing is cheerie, O !
Trees may bud, and birds may sing,
Flowers may bloom, and verdure spring,
Joy to me they canna bring,
Unless wi' thee, my dearie, O ! "—*Tannahill.*

A PICNIC to the top of Dunsarg took place on the day after Mr. and Mrs. John M'Lauchlan's marriage, and Mr. James Park received a polite note from Miss Stewart, inviting him to join the party. James's reply was an elaborate, literary production, more so than even his aunt thought quite correct; and after its despatch, Miss Park schooled him very thoroughly as to the necessity of constantly attending upon Miss Stewart, who had so kindly invited him; never to leave her side—for gentlemen were expected to wait upon the ladies at picnics. She had often felt annoyed at the want of common politeness, on the part of otherwise respectable people, on such

occasions. He must carry Miss Stewart's basket or shawl, pull some nice heather for her, and, as she was a great botanist, he *must* keep beside her and assist her (of course only where it was quite safe) to gather specimens.

Jimsie most literally and faithfully carried out his aunt's instructions, not a little to Mr. M'Nab's annoyance, for he had resolved to be Miss Stewart's squire that day, and Dr. Forrest had appointed himself to play the same part to Lily Easton. The young doctor, however, was called to a case of medical urgency fully ten miles distant, and the picnic party was back in Blinkbonny before his return. Jimsie religiously carried out his aunt's instructions, and was painfully attentive to Miss Stewart during the ascent of the hill. He far outstripped Mr. M'Nab, for he was one of the *party*, and, while enjoying the scenery, was polite and attentive to all; whereas Mr. James Park saw nothing, and nobody, except Miss Stewart, and that not with the eye of an admirer, but rather with that of a body-servant.

When the summit was reached, and lunch spread out, Jimsie was a nimble waiter; he could hardly be induced to become a seated guest. Mr. M'Nab would have been much better pleased had Jimsie allowed *him* to do some little services for Miss Stewart, but

he was completely forestalled. After lunch the party set out in small detachments upon a general ramble among the rocks and gullies of the hill. Miss Stewart and Lily Easton, accompanied by Mr. M'Nab and James Park, were exploring a crevasse, the source of a hill burn which rose near the summit, and which was the habitat of some rare ferns and wild-flowers. James Park so doggedly stuck to Miss Stewart, that Mr. M'Nab was virtually told off to Miss Easton, and a delightful companion she was. Lily stooped to pick a few sprigs of late forget-me-not which grew on the bank, and this reminded her of Mr. M'Nab's weakness for that flower. She archly proposed that he should preserve a few roots carefully, say in Greenknowe garden, until his settlement in the north, when he could have them transplanted; their eyes met, and Lily read his heart through them.

Without apparent design, she moved towards Miss Stewart and Jimsie; the latter had stumbled into a small pool, and was surveying himself in exactly the same attitude as he had done on the previous night. His three companions were tickled, but a sally of Lily's enabled them to laugh freely, and this she followed up by saying, "Leave these two fern-hunters buried in this gloomy gorge, Mr. Park, and please, return with me to the summit. I would feel

greatly obliged if you would tell me the names of the hills and places all round. I believe you know the district well."

"I shall be most happy," was his reply, "if Miss Stewart will excuse me. Perhaps Mr. M'Nab will be kind enough to remain with her while we are absent?" which Mr. M'Nab not only undertook to do, but added that he need not return to the gorge, as they would rejoin them at the hill-top.

Lily walked leisurely towards the summit; every few steps she asked James the names of hills, and burns, and farmhouses; expressed herself astonished at his thorough knowledge of the country, and allowed him not only to display his gallantry, but his local knowledge, which was considerable; and by the time they had reached the top, the two were joined by others, to whom James became geographer-general. What passed in the gorge I cannot tell, for Miss Stewart and Mr. M'Nab were alone. I believe their botanizing was suddenly stopped by their eyes resting, first on a plant of forget-me-not, then on one another—and, that Miss Stewart gathered no more plants. There must have been either a long silence or a good deal spoken, for nearly two hours were spent by them alone in the glen. When they reached the summit, Miss Stewart looked agitated, but Mr. M'Nab

was in exuberant spirits. He quietly took Lily Easton's hand and pressed it so suggestively, yet so nervously, that she fully comprehended his meaning; and good dear Lily replied by returning a long, warm, sisterly squeeze, which at the same time assured Mr. M'Nab that she quite understood him, and heartily rejoiced with him in his happy position. As soon as she could slip round to Mary's side, she grasped her hand, and, under pretence of tidying her bonnet, she took her aside, kissed her warmly, and both shed tears.

Jimsie reinstalled himself as Miss Stewart's "fidus Achates," but Mr. M'Nab became the life and soul of the party; and had any one asked who received most attention from him that day, everybody would have said "Lily Easton;" indeed, some said that "she was setting her cap for him;" "that she did her best to catch him;" "that they never thought she was such an open flirt;" and that "she was daft about him, and showed very little discretion." It was all they knew. Lily was above all gossipy venom. "The sheep go in droves—the eagle flies alone."

The evening party at Greenknowe was a merry one; even Jimsie, apparently easier in his go-ashore dress than in his formal blacks, waited with untiring patience at the piano, turning over the leaves of the music at uncomfortable arm's-length, and always

having the next corner in his hand while the fresh page was being played. Dr. Forrest entered the room as Lily Easton was singing, at Mrs. Stewart's request, one of her favourite Jacobite songs.

"Oh! but ye've been lang o' comin',
Lang, lang, lang o' comin',
Oh! but ye've been lang o' comin',
Our ain, our royal Charlie."

When James Park said, "How appropriate these words are!" Lily felt a little caught, and there was a certain expression of this in her face, as well as in that of the young doctor, when their eyes met. Both felt still more awkward, when Mrs. Stewart asked her to sing *Bonnie Charlie's noo awa'*. Jimsie was looking over some books, to see if he could venture on a song, and Dr. Forrest waited on Lily at the piano; but he waited badly, for, instead of turning the leaf at

"Better lo'ed ye canna be,
Will ye no' come back again?"

he was in a brown study; when Lily looked at him, there was, as nearly as possible, a tear in her eye—and his face was thoughtful, too. This put Miss Easton on her mettle, and added a touching energy to the rest of the song, which delighted everybody in the room.

James Park could find no song to suit him, and after an early supper the party broke up. Dr.

Forrest went to "The Mains" with Miss Easton, all the time, however, feeling that he should hardly go, for his heart was restless within him. He felt that Lily was the backbone of her home, that she simply *could* not be spared; indeed, he knew that she would not leave it, as long as her father and mother were alive; for she had said so repeatedly, before either of them had any idea of their feelings towards each other. Theirs were two noble natures, and deep mutual affection pervaded their intercourse, although it never expressed itself in outward form. They understood each other perfectly, for under all the reserve there dwelt pure love wisely regulated, albeit it was "chained by mighty circumstance."

They walked leisurely to "The Mains," sometimes in silence, sometimes speaking of the events of the day. Luckily Jimsie Park figured prominently in Lily's account of the picnic, and caused a little mirth. Mr. M'Nab also was a good deal spoken of; and, although Miss Easton did not tell what had transpired between Miss Stewart and him, she praised Mary so much, saying that she would make such a good wife, and referring so lovingly to her, that Dr. Forrest easily "read the engagement between the lines," but thought it better just to praise Mary too.

Nicol Fairbairn, with all his love for the "old economy," was fond of the bagpipes, and spent many an evening on the farm-road which stretched from Nancie's Knowe to the back of The Mains farm-steading, playing Highland music. The stirring strains of Nicol's bagpipes, mellowed by a mile's distance, fell on the ears of Miss Easton and Dr. Forrest as they walked along the Broomhill road. These were mostly Jacobite airs, and had constant reference to bonnie Prince Charlie,—"Charlie is my darling;" "Wha'll be king but Charlie?" "Welcome, royal Charlie;" "Waes me for Prince Charlie."

When they parted he had just finished "Will ye no' come back again?" and had begun to render with great feeling—for he was an admirable player—the weird, dirge-like coronach of "Lochaber no more." This sudden change of measure acted like a shock on the two parted friends. Dr. Forrest sauntered homeward slowly and contemplatively, but luckily Nicol was homeward-bound also, and he struck up with great spirit, "The Braes of Glenorchy," which communicated its cheerful spirit to Lily and Charlie Forrest.

Mr. M'Nab was later in leaving than the other guests. I was home fully an hour before he arrived, and was not unprepared for the "secret"

he had to tell me. Next day he asked and received Mrs. Stewart's consent, and Miss Stewart and he started for the Fillies' Den in the evening. They were sitting as lovers sit, and musing as lovers muse, when they heard a voice saying, "Did ye ever see a hoolet?" and, looking up, they saw Big Murray, with his bonnet in his right hand, covering something in his left, which turned out to be a young grey owl.

"I'm gaun to tak' it to wee Strachan," said he; "he'll like it, it's sic a funny, wee, winkin' thing."

"But it will bite him, James," said Miss Stewart.

"Div ye think that?' said the startled tailor; "maybe it will. I'll no' tak' it hame if it'll dae that. I'll tak' it back to the wud an' let it awa'—it'll maybe find its mother. It wad be an awfu' business if it bit Strachan—awfu';" and he made for the wood.

Mr. M'Nab "gave Mr. Barrie the day," by preaching on the following Sabbath. The sermon did not create such a sensation as his former appearances had done, but that was not surprising, considering the events of the past week. Mr. Barrie, however, expressed himself as "exceedingly pleased. The sermon was exhaustive and evangelical, and the treatment of the subject most *judeecious*." Old George

Brown was less graphic than usual. He said, "Last time ye were here, sir, it was as it were the day of your espousals, the day o' the gladness o' yer heart, fresh and pithy; this day's wark was gude tae, but ye're hardly just come the length that we read o' in Amos, when 'the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and *all* the hills shall melt.' But plough awa', sir, at the fallow ground in your study, and ye'll find the corn come ready to hand when ye need it, baith for seed an' for meal."

Mr. M'Nab became the guest of Mrs. Stewart the day after his engagement. He had some difficulty in proposing this change to me, but Mrs. Stewart called for me herself, and said that bachelors, and especially young bachelors, were apt to sit too late; that a housekeeper, however good, was not like a mistress; and that Mr. M'Nab *must* stay at Greenknowe. I am not sure if once or twice John did not keep later (earlier?) hours than he did while with me, but Mrs. Stewart did not know this fact.

On the Sabbath evening, Miss Stewart and Mr. M'Nab set out to visit some sick families. Their first call was for wee Strachan Gemmell. Tibbie had already done her best to give her children "a bit

lesson on the Bible," and they were now listening to Annie Gemmell reading *The Pilgrim's Progress*, from an illustrated copy which Miss Stewart had given them. It was not so profusely illustrated as modern copies are; there were only a few plates in it, but these were often looked at, especially "The man with the muck-rake," and "Mercy faints, the keeper raises her." When Mr. M'Nab had talked a little, Tibbie said to Jamie, "Ye can ask this gentleman the questins that ye were spierin' at me;" then, turning to Mr. M'Nab, she said, "Oor Jamie there's unco ta'en up about the claes that he reads o' in the Bible, but he canna find ony tailors in't. Are there ony, if you please, sir?"

Mr. M'Nab felt rather at a loss how to answer this question, but Jamie gave him a little time to think it out, by asking, "Didna Jacob make a coat to Joseph? It says he made him a coat o' many colours. It would be tartan, nae doubt;—tartan claith has maist colours in't, ony way. Mr. Torrance used to tell us about a man that was staned to death, for takin' an awfu' braw coat that he had nae business wi', an' they staned his family, an' his cattle o' a' kinds—it maun hae been an awfu' dear coat. An' about ane that tore his claes, an' the queen sent him ither anes; she was a friend o' his, but he wadna pit them on; but after

that, the king made him put on terrible braw claes, blue, an' white, an' purple, an' he was putten on a horse an' taen through the toon. It wad be a grand sicht."

Mr. M'Nab, having had time to bethink himself, made interesting references to the clothing mentioned in the Bible, drawing useful lessons from Gehazi's covetousness—Sisera's prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, *meet* for the necks of *them that take* the spoil,—"dyed garments from Bozrah," "filthy rags,"—"white raiment,"—"the wedding garment," etc., to the especial delight of Jamie.

"Ye can ask this gentleman," said Tibbie, "what ye was askin' yer faither last Sabbath, about Samuel's coat, whether it had pockets in't, an' lappels on them or no'. His faither couldna tell him, sir; a' that he said was, that if it was really his mother that made it, there's nae sayin' what a woman tailor would do, for women-folk are very keen o' squirrly-wirlies, baith about their ain claes an' their bairns's. I said to him, says I, Jamie, ye may be sure that she pat pockets in't, an' if she only gaed yince a year to see him, the pockets werena toom when she took the coat to her laddie. But it wadna be sweeties, or gingebread, or trash o' that kind that she wad pit in them, for that wad baith hae dirtied the claes, an' maybe

putten his stamack out o' order. Depend on't, Jamie, says I to him, says I, it wad be books, an' the best o' books. I'm almost sure that in the tae pouch there wad be a copy o' the New Testament, an' in the tither a wee copy o' that grand book Miss Stewart gied us, they ca' the *Pulgrum's Progress.*"

The visitors were tickled a good deal with Tibbie's chronological mistake, but as in other respects her ideas were motherly and good, Mr. M'Nab only said, "Samuel's mother certainly could not have done better than put good books into her son's pockets; but there were no printed books in those days. However, when Samuel grew up, he wrote some of the books of the Bible himself, and we should read the whole of them carefully; for, although I have been years learning to be a minister, I never thought much about the tailors in the Bible; the only ones I can remember at present, are Bezaleel the son of Uri, and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, who made a breastplate and an ephod, and a robe and a broidered coat, and a mitre and a girdle for Aaron, and coats, and bonnets, and girdles, and linen clothes for his sons."

"I never heard my faither speakin' about them; I dinna think he kent them," said Jamie, as the visitors rose to leave.

Strachan generally left Tibbie "to gie the bairns

their lesson;" he "spiered them their questions, from the 'singles questions,' or 'the carritch,'" as the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "adapted to those of weaker capacity," is called in Scotland. The family worship on the Sabbath evening in Strachan Gemmell's was partly a homely explanation, partly a quiet discussion, of one or two chapters, which were read verse about, being nearly the only practice Jamie now had in that way. "He could read fine intill himsel', but there were some awfu' lang-nebbit names in some verses, that he couldna get his tongue round at a'." Strachan's Sabbath evening prayer was devout, reverent, solemnizing, and long.

Annie Strachan was so pleased with *The Pilgrim's Progress* that she read it on week-days, despite Tibbie's singular question, "Lassie, are ye no' feared to read sic a gude book, an' this no' the Sabbath day?" And soon all the household became thoroughly acquainted with the entire book. Strachan indeed said, "It whiles kind o' made their bit plain housie like the 'Palace Beautiful;' it did that."

Matthew Riddell's fortnightly visit to Greenknowe to see "hoo his flowers an' things were doin', an' to sort them," took place on Monday, and Mr. M'Nab had to succumb to the old gardener's persistent effort to "show him a'thing."

"Is yer forget-me-not livin' yet?" began the voluble Matthew; "it'll be dune flowerin', but ye should divide it, an' mak' a bed o't. Are there ony ither flowers about Greenknowe that ye wad like to tak' wi' ye? there's plenty to wale frae, an they're a' guid—a' the best; if ye want yer place to be like Paradeese, ye could never do better than fill 't out o' Greenknowe."

John perfectly agreed with the old gardener.

"Ye was preachin' for Mr. Barrie on Sabbath, they tell me," continued Matthew; "he's a nice kind o' man, but I'm a stainch Voluntary. I was yince an Auld-Kirk man tae, but ever since I've been precentor in Mr. Morrison's Meetin'-house, I've been a Seceder; but I hae that muckle on my head the noo, that I had to get a young chiel to tak' the 'dask,' an' sing for me yesterday afternoon. He did no' that ill, only raither quick in ma opinion, irreverent quick; ord'nar singin' may dae like you, but 'maizick tunes,' as I ca' kirk maizick, should be sung slow, slow."

"What is on your mind just now, gardener?" said Mr. M'Nab, "that so oppresses you?"

"Weel, sir," began Matthew, "first there's this rockery bathered me, but I own that I'm past that, an' proud o' my handiwark; then there's this questin

about interferin' wi' the Seceders gettin' a refreshment atween sermons on Sabbath days. Ye understan' oor kirk gangs in twice; we hae twa diets, yin begins at eleven, and the afternoon yin at twa o'clock. Mr. Barrie has only ae diet, an' he gangs in at twal o'clock. But there's new notions gottin in among the county police noo. I think mysel', that Draper Ren'ick's at the bottom o't. Oor session's taen the thing to the court; an' the Shirra has decided that, as the Ack says, 'the inns maun be shut durin' the hours o' divine service,' that *that* means the service in the Auld Kirk. Wi' ours gaun in at eleven, an' the Auld Kirk at twal, an' no skailin' till twa, the privilege that oor forefathers, an' up till noo oorsel's, enjoyed, o' gettin 'rowes an' yill' in the inns, is violently taen awa' frae us; for a' that the Shirra said was, 'Let the Dissenters change their hour of worship.' It's fair Erastianism—it's tieranny—it's persecution. It mak's an odds even to me, for I often gaed in wi' some o' our maist respectable families frae the country, an' I used to pass the 'tween sermons' wi' them in the 'Black Bull;' an' forbye, I'm determined to tak' Rob Rattray, the landlord, before the Shirra for definition (*sic*) o' chara'ter."

"Before the Sheriff?" said Mr. M'Nab, "for defamation of character, gardener? What did he say? If

you take my advice, you will think very seriously before going to law."

"What did he say?" said the incensed gardener: "what did he no' say? what has he no' dune to me? He has calumniated my chara'ter by falsification, definition, and every other sense of the word, an' at ony rate he's a man that never cohabited my house. An' when I remonstrat' wi' him about deprivin' us Dissenters o' oor privileges, as citizens an' Christians, he says to me afore George Marr, an' Tam Baillie, an' Nicol Fairbairn, an' a gude wheen mair, in the open market,—'Matthie,' says he, 'ye're keener o' drinkin' a dram than payin' for't; gin it hadna been that ye got a bit glass for naething on Sabbath, when it was gaun gear ony way, ye wad never hae enjoyed yer privileges, as ye ca'd, wi' yer ain siller.' Is that no' definition o' chara'ter, sir? Neither him nor no other person ever saw me the waur o' drink a' my life, an' I hope they never will. An' forbye, he was very impident to me at our congregational denner.

"Ye understan' there's a denner amang the session an' a heap o' the members every 'ear in the 'Black Bull,' an' a gude denner we get; an' a canty nicht we hae, wi' speeches an' toasts an' sic-like; wi' me bein' the precentor, I get my denner for naething, exceptin' that I hae to sing a wheen sangs. Didna

Rob Rattray say that I took mair meat an' drink than ony ither twa, and that when the minister was proposin' the toast o' 'the progress o' Liberal policy' (for ye'll nae doubt understand that a' Seceders is Whigs), that I toomed twa jugs o' toddy. I own it was a lang speech, but I only took aff a bit dribble, an' brewed anither bumper. I maun say that I took *hit* clean aff when he was done, for I countit the toast deserved a bumper."

"If that is all, gardener," said Mr. M'Nab, "you should let law alone; it is expensive; and besides, your character is such that you can afford to let the innkeeper speak as he pleases. No man need put himself much about though *lies* be told about him; some of us would blush more to hear the *truth* spoken about ourselves."

"Ye're very kind, sir," replied Matthew; "that's what our Beck says. Ye maun understan' she's an awfu' woman for Scotch proverbs; 'deed her twa books is an auld collection o' them, an' 'Buchan,'—ye'll ken 'Buchan'? *Buchan's Domestic Medicine*,—she kens a' that's in that book frae brod till brod; 'deed she's as of'en ca'd Buchan, or Beck Buchan, as Beck Riddell. An' she gangs out as a nurse; she's been wi' Mrs. Spowart last week, and Mrs. Spowart says that she's haen lots o' different nurses, for she's haen a big family,

but she never had yin like oor Beck;—but ye'll no' ken Mrs. Spowart,—nae matter. Ye were advisin' me no' to gang to the law, so does Beck. Says she to me, 'Matthie,' says she, 'pleadin' at the law is like fechtin' through a whin-bus', the harder the blows, the sairer the scarts.' 'A' law is no' justice.' Never you heed him; 'just jouk an' let the jaw gang by'—I daresay she's richt."

"She is right, Matthew, quite right," said Mr. M'Nab. "Be guided by her advice, and in the matter of law, remember the old proverb, 'Let sleeping dogs lie.'"

"She wad hardly do that hersel', though," said Matthew, "when ane o' oor houses was burnt. Ye maun understan' that the house we bide in's oor ain, an' ither three. They were a' insured, an' the plate wi' the Insurance Company's name was nailed on ilka ane o' them. It was a thack roof that took fire, an' in middlin' gude order, although it was auld, for I got twa or three bottles o' strae to mend it every noo an' then. Weel, it's burned doon, an' Beck wad hae a *sclate* roof; it looks better, an's mair fashionable. The Insurance Company wadna pit on a *sclate* roof, an' wadna gie us as muckle as wad pit it on. They got a valy-ator, an' he only gied us the value o' the auld house. Beck was neither to haud nor to bind at

that. She rampaged about, sayin' she wad hae justice, an' sic-like, an' it took Mr. Morrison an' me a' oor time to get her to see that she could get nae mair frae the Insurance Company than just what the house was insured for. We got that, though ; but even yet, Beck harps awa' about the extra price we had to pay for the sclate roof, as fair rubbery, an' she gar'd me change the Insurance Company."

But Mr. M'Nab found out, as many people had done before him, that Matthew's flow of small talk was almost interminable, so he expressed sympathy with him in his troubles, admiring appreciation of his gardening labours at Greenknowe, and, in bidding him good-morning, said he would be delighted to get his place turned into a paradise by transplants from Greenknowe.

Matthew's left thumb was again elevated, and the two largest fingers on his right hand had begun to register the flowers he recommended. "There's dalisses, an' there's fushies, an' there's "—but by this time Mr. M'Nab was in the house, and Matthew turned to his work, saying, "He's a ceevil-spoken kind o' lad that, although he's an Auld Kirk probawtioner."

CHAPTER XIII.

ADAM RANKINE'S DEATH.

"I'm wearin' awa', Jean,
Like snaw wreaths in thaw, Jean,
I'm wearin' awa' to
The land o' the leal."

NO neater or more purpose-like body entered my shop than Mrs. Rankine of Gibbiesbrae; as regularly as Saturday afternoon came round, she came to do her simple marketing, bringing for sale butter, eggs, honey, or such produce as she had, by untiring care and industry, been able to collect; and, as Tibbie Murray's description of her ducks' eggs being "like soda-water bottles" was fairly borne out by their unusual size, they were in great demand. There was also a yellow richness about her butter, for besides the "gude gang" which "Crummie," the cow of the ploughman of Gibbiesbrae, had in the Clover Park, she got a little bean-meal. This improved the butter, which, besides being finely flavoured and firm, was

also neatly rolled in fresh, glistening "dockens," so as to be tempting to good housewives.

Mrs. Rankine's family easily consumed all the butter-milk, but little of the butter was allowed them for "kitchen," and they seemed to thrive perfectly well without it; she was, however, careful to give her husband "his will o't, for a man workin' hard a' day, needs as gude meat as ye can gie him." I suspect that Adam got *her* share as well as his own, but she put the matter nicely,—"she didna care about it, she *thocht* she was better without it."

Mrs. Rankine had also several "skeps" of bees, and thousands of these busy little toilers ranged the clover fields and the country round, to bring to the "stackyard" of straw hives which stretched along the back of her furthy garden, "the sweet food they make." This was generally sold "in the comb," which she handled carefully so as not to have it broken.

I had often been struck by the strong backbone of industry, economy, and sterling worth displayed by Mrs. Rankine. Like "Peggy" in *The Gentle Shepherd*, her rule was,

> "Whate'er he wins, I'll guide wi' canny care,
> And win the vogue at market, trone, or fair,
> For halesome, clean, cheap, and sufficient ware."

And I looked forward to her weekly visit with

pleasure. Her honest motherly face, her perfectly fair dealing, her thankfulness when an extra price was given for excellence of quality, even although it was but fair market value after all, tended to make her a favourite,—one that you would wish to call a friend, and whom you would—even more —wish to call you—friend.

Every Saturday she appeared in her duffle cloak and beaver hat, the gift of a lady many years ago; its quality was "fail-me-never," although its shape, unfortunately, had gone out of fashion, and had been succeeded by the "meal scoop" or "coal-scuttle" style. With Mrs. Rankine it was always "business first;" she usually made straight for the back counter, took her wares from the clean reticule, and laid them neatly out.

I lost no time in joining her, and as little in buying, for almost before I had paid her (all such transactions were ready money), her produce was either apportioned, or already transferred to willing purchasers; after which she got her pure white bag filled with the groundwork of the "flour meal" scones which she baked for *Sabbath*, or other goods needed for the household. Need I add that none of these were luxuries, all were well considered before they were bought, and paid for, before she left the shop.

About the latter end of 1836, in answer to my usual inquiries as to how her family were, she said that "*He* wasna jist a'thegither weel himsel'; he has haen a bit gey heavy cauld hingin' aboot him for a week; I'm gaun to tak' him oot a stick o' sugar-ally (liquorice); an' I'll ca' round at Mrs. Riddell's i' the hame-gaun; she's a skilly body, she's weel acquaint wi' thae things, an' I'll spier at her what I should gie him; she's often gien me gude advice about the bairns's bits o' complaints. I grow some camomile flowers for her, an' horehound, an' some ither herb medicines."

Mrs. Riddell has already been introduced to my readers as "Beck Riddell," "Beck Buchan," and "Buchan." Dr. Buchan's *Book on Domestic Medicine* was a household word as well as a medical power in Scotland during the earlier part of this century, and deservedly so, for it treated familiarly of all sorts of diseases, and happily combined medical research, information about the causes and treatment of "trouble," and good common sense. What an old familiar sound will "Hand me down *Buchan*" be to many of my elderly readers!

Beck knew nearly every line of *Buchan*, and had put most of its contents into actual practice. She also dispensed simple drugs, and medicinal herbs, either in

a dried state or in decoctions, very often gratis; and her advice was readily, even volubly given; for under a rough exterior and an "ex cathedra" air of importance, she had a good head and a good heart.

Mrs. Riddell entered with great interest upon the consideration of Adam Rankine's case. "There's naething waur," said she, "than a sittin' doon cauld; pit extra flannen aboot his throat an' his chest; let him tak' as gude care o' himsel' as he can, no' to get wat, 'specially wat feet," etc. She also gave Mrs. Rankine some simple preparations, and ended with, "A cauld needs the cook fully as mickle as the doctor; see that his vi'tuals is, as I was tellin' ye, heart'nin' an' temp'in', an' the best ye can gie him."

Everything that Mrs. Rankine could do for Adam was done, but despite all her care and efforts, as well as the considerate kindness of his master and mistress, who insisted on his keeping the house and taking care of himself, he got no better. "Keepin' the hoose" was to Adam a bitter thought, and one that he was very reluctant to entertain. He manfully stuck to his work, despite his increasing unfitness for it, because he felt that a stern necessity was laid upon him to "keep on his feet," for his family's sake; and even Dr. Stevenson could hardly get him to keep "within doors." Strong remedial measures were

adopted, causing him considerable pain, but the canny man never murmured; for although there was an occasional writhe, or an indrawn, sudden, loudish sigh, when his chest was being dressed, yet he was an exemplary patient. Dr. Stevenson made his case known to Miss Stewart, Miss Park, and other friends of the sick, and this resulted in a constant flow of kindly sympathy, nourishing food, delicacies, and sick-bed requirements, gratifying alike to the givers and to the receivers. Indeed, these tokens of Christian thoughtfulness seemed to unhinge Mrs. Rankine and Adam more than even the illness did, for they oftener broke down when these were received, than at any other time; and frequently their kindly visitors did the same, when they looked from the spent figure of the once sturdy ploughman, to the anxious, careworn face of his faithful wife, or to the six little children, who felt awed at their presence, and huddled themselves together in the corner between the "dresser" and the "meal ark."

Adam's case, in Dr. Stevenson's opinion, was clearly one of pulmonary consumption. He requested Mrs. Riddell to break this to Mrs. Rankine, and she did it considerately. It was not, however, new, either to her or her husband. Nearly a week before this, after all the children were in bed, and she had dressed

his chest, and given him some strengthening food, to use her own simple words, "He took off his cowl (night-cap) very quietly an' solemn-like, took my hand between baith o' his, an', lookin' kindly at me, he shut his eyes and said, 'Marget, it seems to be God's will that I'm to be taen awa' frae ye a' or lang. Ye've been a gude wife to me,—ye hae been that,—better, a heap, than I've been a husband to you.' 'Oh, dinna say that, Adam,' I said; 'dinna say that, I beg o' ye.' 'An' God has been kind to us a'; an' I should trust Him,—I ken I should,—but oh, Marget, it's a sair, sair thocht, the thocht o' leavin' you to fecht single-handed wi' a' thae puir wee bairns. It looks a lang, dark road, but it's *His* wull; an' He'll uphold you, an' undertake for you an' them. We'll meet before the Throne, Marget; an' oh, be sure an' bring a' the bairns wi' ye.'"

Every night since that on which the worthy couple had thus been setting "their house in order," one of the little sleeping children was carried by its mother into its dying father's bed, and his "cowl" was reverently taken off, and his hands, now soft and thin, were gently laid on its little head, and a dying father's heart was breathed into a living Father's ear, for "this member of Thy little flock, that will soon be an orphan; for my heart is sore pained within me, because the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Oh, Father,

think on them. Let Thy work appear unto Thy servant their mother, and Thy glory unto the children; for, hast Thou not said, For the needy shall not alway be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. The poor committeth himself to Thee. Thou art the Father of the fatherless. Let this child be one of the lambs of Thy flock, carried in Thy bosom. Make it true in its experience, 'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.' Fulfil to him Thy gracious promise, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'"

When "wee Mary," the youngest, was brought to him, the pathos of his prayer is beyond description, or rather his prayers, for Mrs. Rankine could not deny his request, "Let the wee hinny lie beside me a' nicht."

Every week since his father's illness, a letter from home was brought to Willie Rankine in Edinburgh by the carrier, and, as Adam got worse, Jamie Dunbar went to Gibbiesbrae every Sabbath afternoon, in order to be able to tell Willie exactly how his father was. Willie was now a journeyman plumber, earning fair wages, and he truly honoured his father and his mother, by gladly ministering to their necessities.

When word came that the end could not be far

distant, Willie started one Saturday afternoon, walked home, a distance of nearly thirty miles, and only left his father's bedside during the hours of church service on Sabbath; for although Willie wished to remain with him, his father insisted on his going to the house of God; for "maybe," said he, "ye may bring home a portion for me. I have requested to be remembered in prayer by the congregation."

Accordingly Willie went to the church of his fathers, the Auld Licht Antiburgher Church of Broomhill, and the first thing he heard was the precentor reading that "the prayers of this congregation are requested for a member in sore trouble, and for his afflicted family."

None but those who have heard the extempore prayers of devout, pious ministers of the old school, such as the Rev. Mr. Peden of Broomhill, could believe the wonderful gift he had of combining devotional texts in prayer, so as to carry every listener with him in profound sympathy,—graphically describing the case of the sufferer as being made to say, "I am feeble and sore broken; the troubles of my heart are enlarged, I am become a bottle in the smoke, I am like a broken vessel. All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me; the terrors of death are fallen upon me."

Then, pleading for the sufferer in equally appropriate language, that God would make all his bed in his sickness, send help from the sanctuary and strengthen him out of Zion, help him to cast all his burden upon the Lord, to say, Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him, to experience the truth of the precious promise, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." And when he came to plead for the mother and the children, one would have thought that the whole Bible was made up of promises to the poor, the afflicted, the widow, and the fatherless.

Comforting to his father and mother was the "full pitcher of the pure river of water of life," which their son brought to them that afternoon. Adam spoke of it as "the water of the well of Bethlehem," "the brook that runneth by the way;" and Mrs. Rankine said it was like "a fountain of gardens, a well o' living waters and streams from Lebanon;" just like God's bow seen in the cloud.

Willie had to walk to Edinburgh in the afternoon. Before leaving, his father said, "Willie, ma man, ye'll need to fill my place as weel as ye can to yer mither, an' to yer brithers an' sisters. I'll pray for grace to

be given you, an' be sure and pray for't yersel'; no one ever sought it in vain. I'll seek nae rash vow frae ye; I'll leave it a' to God and your ain conscience; but before ye leave ye maun mak' worship."

Willie never had been asked to do this before, and the circumstances were exceedingly trying. When the youngest girl Mary saw the family Bible brought out, she crept to her brother's side and signed to get on his knee, as she used to do when her father took "the Books;" and when seated there she said, "Sing 'The Lord's my Shepherd,' Willie,—I can say't." He did not feel able to sing at all; there were too many full hearts in the house to admit of singing being possible; but wee Mary's words fell on her father's ears like the fluttering of an angel's wing on a message of peace, and from the sick-bed came the first faint quivering note, which was taken up by nearly all, and the psalm-singing was got through wonderfully. None of them had ever found it so rich before, and none of the elder ones ever forgot THAT singing of it.

At the close of the singing, Willie proposed to read the 88th Psalm; but his father said, "No, Willie; it's a' dark, there's no' a glint o' hope throughout the hale o't; read rather the 27th,—it fits us a'." Willie *could* not engage in prayer aloud,—and no wonder; but wee Mary, thinking it was her bed-time, repeated

her little prayers, ending with the Lord's Prayer; and there came from the sick-bed, "We will soon be a family broken on earth, may we be a family unbroken in the skies. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

Parting with Willie, as he started for Edinburgh, was a trying scene. His father's last words, "Live the life of the righteous, that you may die his death," rang in his ears all the way in.

The death-bed scene was a sad one, I will not attempt to describe it. Annie had come from Larkton, and she proved a great comfort. When all was over, Mrs. Rankine got relief in tears, mingled with expressions of "My Adam, my dear, dear man; my puir bairns. Thy will be done."

Jamie Murray had asked Mrs. Rankine to let him know whenever the "change" occurred. When the word came, Jamie patted the little messenger on the head, said, "Puir wee man. Tell yer mother that I'm away to tell Willie;" and within ten minutes he was striding on his way to Edinburgh; and seven hours thereafter he was in Willie's lodgings, with the sad news.

It was his first visit to Edinburgh, and a short one, for he arrived about ten o'clock at night; and Willie

and he started before five o'clock next morning for Gibbiesbrae, which they reached about one o'clock in the afternoon. Jamie Murray spent a few minutes in the desolated cottage, just long enough to admit of Mrs. Rankine and Willie fixing the day and the hour of the funeral.

Funeral letters were not then common in humble life; and Jamie, that same day, called upon friends and neighbours, to tell them "that they were warned to come to Adam Rankine's funeral, on Friday afternoon at two o'clock." He did even more, for from one or two persons, he, at his own suggestion, asked "if they had ony black claes they could kindly gie him, an' he wad make them doon for the laddies."

By the time he reached home he had a fairly-sized bundle. Strachan was so pleased at Jamie's good sense, that he started off to measure the boys at Gibbiesbrae; and, tired as Jamie was, he was so zealous in this good cause, that he merely stretched himself on the bedcover and had two hours' sleep till his father's return; thereafter, the two set to work, and wrought hard nearly all night. By next afternoon, Jamie was off with a suit of decent black clothes for the four Rankine boys, in fulfilment of Strachan's words to their mother, "Dinna bother yoursel' about the laddies' claes, Mrs. Rankine; Jamie has

managed to get a lot o' things that'll no need muckle dune to them; ye'll get them the morn's afternoon, even if we should need to fit them a wee better after Friday."

The custom of wearing "deep mournings" was carried to an absurd extent by all classes fifty years ago. Not only were black clothes considered absolutely necessary for men and boys, but crape was worn on the hat, with bows and two long hangers behind; white neckcloths and white fronts were also put on; and "weepers" were sewed round the cuffs of the coat. The females likewise strove to get black clothes, with a superabundance of crape, and these expenses, added to the heavy calls made on the family purse by the illness itself, often seriously backloaded poor widows and orphans.

The interment expenses were also heavy; but by the time of which I write, the controversy about the "mortcloth" dues had made it not uncommon to do without one. The "mortcloth" was a covering of black velvet thrown over the coffin, when it was being carried to the graveyard by the relatives and neighbours. There were generally two or three mortcloths, and the charges varied according to their quality. The cheapest was generally a very shabby affair, rusty-brown, and thin from exposure and wear;

the charge even for the use of *it* was ten shillings. And for the "new" mortcloth, which was a massive bit of rich black velvet, two guineas.

Mrs. Rankine, even in her deep sorrow, became a "funeral reformer;" she discarded the mortcloth, as well as the still more objectionable practice of providing a refreshment, in the shape of wine and whisky, at the service held in the house before the funeral "lifted." All was "done decently and in order." Her late husband's "first-in-hand" plough horse "Dick," in a clean cart, and with blackened hoofs, headed the funeral procession, followed closely by the five sons, Willie with the two elder ones in front, and Jamie Murray following with the two younger ones; for they "took" to him, despite the presence of uncles and friends. A considerable number of respectful mourners, afoot, in gigs, or on horseback, were present, and Mrs. Rankine was consoled, as Scotch folks always are, by its being such a largely-attended funeral.

Next day the younger children began to play and laugh as usual,—they did not know the loss they had sustained,—and their prattling glee partly saddened and partly cheered their mother. Wee Mary was so delighted with her black frock, that she had to be shown it again and again; and Mrs. Rankine, when gratifying her, relieved her own burdened heart by

taking the little lassie into her arms, and pressing her warmly to her bosom. She slept little on Saturday night. How truly could she have used Longfellow's lines,—

> "For my heart was hot and restless,
> And my life was full of care;
> And the burden laid upon me
> Seemed greater than I could bear."

During her restless tossing to and fro, depressing thoughts kept rising in her mind, fixing themselves round familiar texts, such as, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness;" and the thought of going to church for the first time as a widow, called up the touching remembrance, "When we took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company." She rose early on Sabbath morning, very sad at heart, full of fightings without and fears within, for she wished to be resigned to God's will, and she truly was; but her stunned, weary, and heavy-laden soul was tempest-tossed, and no wonder. She opened the sash of the little window to admit fresh air, drew aside a corner of the curtain, and sat down to seek for "quickening" out of the family Bible. Adam's father's Bible it had been, as well as theirs. She intended to read the 37th Psalm, in the Scotch metrical translation, for its words had now a fuller meaning to her:

"I have been young, and now am old,
Yet have I never seen
The just man left, nor that his seed
For bread have beggars been.

. . . . .

"Mark thou the perfect, and behold
The man of uprightness;
Because that surely of this man
The latter end is peace."

While turning up the 37th Psalm, her eye rested first on the 5th verse of the 36th, and she had read the following lines:—

"Thy mercy, Lord, is in the heavens;
Thy truth doth reach the clouds:
Thy justice is like mountains great;
Thy judgments deep as floods:
Lord, Thou preservest man and beast,
How precious is Thy grace!
Therefore"—

when a burst of bird-melody broke on her ears from a choir of linnets, blackbirds, and larks outside. To her it seemed instantaneous; possibly it was only the fresh air that had cooled her head, and awakened the keener sense of hearing, but so much was she struck with it, that she stopped at "Therefore," and repeated it thoughtfully,—"*Therefore!*"—

"THEREFORE, in shadow of Thy wings,
Men's sons their trust will place."

"Therefore," said she, "just *because* we see God feeding His birds,—THEREFORE—He'll never forget His children. Lord, Thou preservest man and beast, THEREFORE."

That word strengthened her with strength in her soul. In prayer she thanked God for it as for a message sent direct to herself, and she found such freedom of access to Him who is *touched* with a feeling of our infirmities, that she rose from her knees, feeling she had obtained mercy, and that she would find grace to help in time of need. Then, repeating with strong gratitude and faith a verse that was an old favourite,—

> "The Lord will light my candle, so
> That it shall shine full bright,
> The Lord my God will also make
> My darkness to be light,"—

she set about her heavy task with a hopeful, trusting heart, and to her dying day her favourite word, which never lost its power, but always served as an anchor to her soul, was "THEREFORE."

The whole family sat in the old familiar pew in Broomhill "Meetin'-house" that day, and the last psalm given out was the one with the "therefore" in it. Before Willie started that evening to return to his work in Edinburgh, the psalm with the "therefore" rose to heaven in quivering and broken, but sincere and heart-soothing melody, from this dwelling of the righteous, partly to the surprise of Jamie Murray, who had come to convoy Willie a few miles on the

road, but greatly to the delight of "wee Strachan," whom he had brought with him, to leave at Mrs. Rankine's till he came back. The poor silly child's presence rendered the pain of parting from Willie less trying, alike to his mother and to them all.

Mrs. Rankine had to leave Gibbiesbrae as soon as she could get another house, and this gave her much concern; but it was done for her. When the funeral was past and the chief mourners had gone, Jamie Dunbar gave a hint to those in the churchyard that he would like to say a word. It was, that something should be done for Mrs. Rankine; and this had been so much in everybody's thoughts, that it seemed as if the whole company had waited in the churchyard expecting such a proposal.

It was heartily taken up, and as heartily carried out. Within a week Mrs. Rankine was told that a small holding in the Laigh Road of Blinkbonny, with a house, a small garden, a park, and a byre for three cows, was taken for her. Within a month she was comfortably settled in Blinkbonny, and so were the two nice milk cows that kind friends had provided. At the bottom of the garden she found stances erected for her beehives, and a pig-house ready; so that all her live stock were soon as much at home in Blinkbonny as they had been at Gibbiesbrae.

Really, they were more daintily fed now, as, for this purpose, scraps from the village were given to her out of a great many houses. Sometimes, indeed, she expressed herself ill-pleased at servants for "perfect wasterfu'ness, puttin' away as pigs' meat, gude meat that onybody could use." And those sensible girls that took the hint, often thereby got a better place.

Her untiring thrift and industry soon enabled her to buy a third cow; her children were plainly but sufficiently fed and educated, and early trained to work, beginning by herding the cows while grazing at the roadside, or gathering meadow hay and brackens for littering the stock, keeping the garden clean, delivering the milk, gathering up fragments, etc.

A volume might be filled with the everyday experiences of her quiet, humble, useful life. Her works praised her in the gates, her children arose and called her blessed. Jamie Murray brought "wee Strachan" there every Sabbath morning, and he got a drink of warm milk. The first morning, however, Jamie was nearly ordered to the door. He offered to pay for the milk, and Mrs. Rankine's usual good temper failed her, for she said in a sneller tone than ever Jamie had heard her use, "If ye daur to insult me wi' doin' that again, I'll never"— But she choked on the last words, for they were strange to her.

Nicol Fairbairn was, however, sorely exercised about Mrs. Rankine's not seeing it to be her duty to continue attending the Auld Licht Church at Broomhill. He thought that four miles were nothing to the maintaining of "her testimony," and enlarged to her about "defection, backsliding, and covenant-breaking." Mrs. Riddell took the other side; and as Mrs. Rankine found the Rev. Mr. Morrison quite as edifying as Mr. Peden, she connected herself with his church; and there were no more regular attenders in the Secession Meeting-house than the Rankines. Before she had finally decided, Nicol Fairbairn disturbed her by constantly calling to argue the matter with her, and she asked Mrs. Riddell how to get rid of him. "Just batter yer door wi' paraphrases, an' he'll never look the airt ye're on," was Beck's reply; for the "paraphrases" were such an abomination in his sight, that when his children bought a school Bible, he cut them out and burned them.

About three weeks after her husband's death, Mrs. Rankine met old George Brown at his door, and was telling him about Adam's death and the "therefore" of the 36th Psalm. Amongst other words of comfort which this patriarchal man gave her, were three things, that he said he had heard a worthy minister say to a woman who had lost a godly husband.

"Well," said he, "there are many things you have reason to be thankful for, but I will particularly mention three. The first is, that you have long been blessed with the companionship of a godly man. The second is, that that godly man has got into far better company than yours. And the third is, that if you follow that godly man, in as far as he followed Christ, you will get into that better company too."

I merely add, in closing this chapter, that it was old George Brown, who was a country wright as well as a small farmer, that put up, during the week after this conversation, the stances for the bees, and repaired the "soo's cruivie."

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AULD GEORGE BROWN'S

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1837.

"Stockbridge and Jamaica Street now will outface
All the gentry of King Street and proud Moray Place,
Voting under the Bill with the franchise so low.
See what droves both the Cowgate and Canongate send,
The High Street, from closes and wynds without end,
See what swarms from the Bow and Grassmarket unkennel,
Burke's corner, Main Point, Potterrow, and the Vennel,
Voting under the Bill with the franchise so low."
Edin. Election Ballad.

A DISSOLUTION of Parliament took place in July 1837, shortly after the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne of Great Britain, and the general election which followed in the latter part of that year, created considerable excitement in and around Blinkbonny.

The county in which the parish lay had been keenly contested in the general elections of 1833 and 1835; in the former, the Tories—for such was then the name of the political party now known as "Conservative"—won by a small majority; the Whigs, now called the Liberals, gained the latter by a few votes;

and both sides were unremitting in their efforts to secure a victory in 1837.

Lord Dunsarg was the leading Whig in the district; Sir John M'Lelland, the lord of the manor of Blinkbonny, was a strong Tory; and each exerted his powerful influence on behalf of the candidate he favoured, whom I will call Sir Francis Davidson on the Tory side, and Sir George Carse on the Whig.

These were the days of open voting—vote by ballot had not been introduced. A register was kept in the polling booth by an agent on each side, in which all the votes, when given, were recorded; a copy of this was sent every few minutes to the committee rooms, and all throughout the course of the election it was thus known who had voted, for whom he had voted, and what voters had not come forward. Swift riders on each side were also constantly travelling between the polling stations, bringing the state of the poll at each, and the numbers thus brought were summed up, and, at short intervals, the state of the poll, over all, was placarded.

These features of former elections created an amount of feverish excitement at the polling stations, compared with which, elections under the present "ballot" system are tameness itself. During the last hour, when the absentees, who had been persist-

ently hunted up, were driven in, the interest was intense, and cheers or groans saluted each arrival. To the crowds looking on, this "whipping of cripples" gave great fun, for these voters were generally timid and irresolute, and they were saluted with possibly appropriate, but certainly opprobrious epithets, such as "Howkit-out mowdies" (moles); "Ye'll get the ring taen out o' yer nose when ye come out." "Did they tak' ye out o' the cradle, did they, puir wee orphan?" "In ahint here, collie!" Even the aged and infirm who had often to be carried into the booths in chairs, were not exempted from offensive remarks, such as "Tak' care he doesna fa' a' bits;" "Dinna shake the mummy;" "Kirkyard deserter," and worse. Moreover, voters, candidates, and active members of committee were frequently pelted with mud, eggs (not the freshest), and other unwelcome missiles. Fortunately such "horse play" is largely a thing of the past.

Canvassing by the candidates, accompanied by influential supporters, was actively carried on. Every voter was personally visited, and plied with arguments, and inducements of various kinds, to secure his vote. Consequently there was a good deal of "racing and chasing" done by county magnates all around Blinkbonny in the autumn of 1837.

Miss Sommerville of Fillies' Den was not at all a

pronounced politician, but she was exceedingly particular about the farms and holdings on her estate being neatly kept. And knowing that Lord Dunsarg, Sir John M'Lelland, and other landed proprietors, as well as the candidates themselves, would visit her tenants, she resolved to pay an early visit to each, in order to satisfy herself that everything was in good order. Her first call was upon Thomas Gray, who occupied a small farm, rocky and steep, lying along the side of the Blinkie Burn, called Wrinkly Scaurs in the lease, but in common talk the tenant and the place were alike called "Rinkie;" and, attached to the farm, there was a bone-crushing mill, driven by the waters of the burn.

The bone-mill was a standing eyesore; if there had been such a word as *nose-sore*, the two together would have fitly expressed Miss Sommerville's feelings regarding Wrinkly Scaurs. "Rinkie" was an industrious man, and regularly paid his rent, but he was rough-speaking and blunt. A bone-mill is of necessity very unsavoury, but on this occasion the stock of bones spread out to dry, previous to being ground, was large; and the hot weather told powerfully on them, and through them most offensively on the surrounding atmosphere. The bone-miller had employed a rough, wild fellow called Dan Corbett to

assist him for a few days, and the two were leaning against the wall on each side of the mill door, leisurely smoking from black "cutty" pipes, when the miller suddenly whipped his pipe out of his mouth, and, concealing it in his hand, said in a startled tone, "Preserve me, if there's no' the auld leddy hersel'; for yer life, Dan, dinna let her see you," at the same time giving sudden attention to the mill-sluice.

Dan's pipe and his person disappeared alike quickly in two compound lithe whirls, and once *inside* of the mill *he* was safe from genteel interruption; but his ferocious bull-dog "Burke" was chained to a tree near the mill door, and the appearance of the Fillies' Den huge mastiff "Sir Ralph" made him noisy and furious. The want of neatness about the place, the unsavouriness of the bones, "Sir Ralph's" persistent facing up of "Burke," and "Burke's" noisy fury, ruffled Miss Sommerville's temper, and she spoke very sharply to Thomas Gray, so sharply, that "Rinkie" had much difficulty in keeping himself cool, as he said:

"There canna but be a strong smell about a bane-mill, my leddy, dae what ye like. It's no' a place for leddies to come near; if ye'll jist bide awa', it'll never bather ye."

"But," said she, "Lord Dunsarg and Sir John will be calling here about the election."

"Baith o' them," replied Rinkie, "buys banes frae me, an' even sends their ain banes to be grund here, so they needna speak."

"But your cattle look very poor," said she, pointing to some that were grazing in a field. "Why do you not rear nice large sheep, as I do? your fields near the river should do admirably for sheep."

"Sheep!" said Rinkie testily, "sheep on the braes near the burn? Ye've surely never seen them. They're liker a quarry than a farm. 'Deed it's weel ca'd Wrinkly Scaurs, for it's naething but scaurs. As wrinkled an' stany as an auld tattie-howker's face. Feed sheep? It maybe micht do for goats, but even they wad need to be stainch teetotallers, or they couldna keep their feet."

This gruff speech, together with the noisy fury of Burke and the nauseous smell, provoked Miss Sommerville to retort very severely. This so enraged Rinkie, that he raised his voice, and said angrily,—

"Ye're aye findin' fau't. The place is far owre dear, an' if it wasna for the mill I wad see you an' your Wrinkly Scaurs far eneuch. *Ye'll* daur to tell me to graze sheep in yer auld quarry holes? Ye're jist an auld, interferin', thrawn sorra; ye're an' auld wrinkled scaur yersel', that ye are."

Miss Sommerville could scarcely refrain from

paying him back in his own coin, but she restrained herself, and said in a highly-offended tone, "This to me! fellow!—to me!!!" Then, surveying the miller and the mill, she said to the coachman, "Get me away from these disgusting nuisances; drive to Blackbrae."

After she had gone, the miller put together, even to Dan's astonishment, a long string of the strong Y's of Scotch terms of disapprobation, and said that "the auld harridan was a yammerin', yaffin', yelpin', yatterin' yad."

The farm of Blackbrae, which Miss Sommerville next visited, was occupied by Mrs. Tait and her son David, and it was always tidy. David was a quiet, wordless man, and he listened with astonishment, and evident sympathy, to the account Miss Sommerville gave of her reception at Wrinkly Scaurs, which she concluded by saying, "Mr. Tait, just fancy what the impertinent, vulgar fellow dared to call me,—'an auld interferin' thrawn sorra,' and an"— But the other expression was rankling too bitterly to be reproduced, so she merely repeated, "an auld interferin' thrawn sorra," and added,—"and worse, Mr. Tait, *far* worse!"

"Did Thomas Gray really say that to yer very face, my leddy?" said David, looking shocked.

"To my very face, and loud enough to be heard by everybody about his place."

"It was very ill dune o' him, *very*," said the canny David. "I've often thocht it, but I never wad 'a' thocht o' sayin't afore yer very face."

Miss Sommerville was horror-struck, and she certainly looked it. David observed his mistake the moment he was done speaking, but he was so "dumfoundered" that he could only look on the ground abashed, and utterly speechless. She looked "daggers," and said sternly, "Sir! how dare you!" Then, suddenly stiffening herself up, she looked stolidly before her, said testily to the coachman, "Drive home," and left poor David twirling his bonnet in great mental agony, and saying to himself, when his speech returned, "It was awfu' stupid o' me—most awfu'—just most *awfu'* AWFU' stupid." Miss Sommerville undertook no other visits of inspection among her tenantry during the election.

"Rinkie" was not, however, difficult to canvass. When Sir John M'Lelland called for him, he said, "If I'm in Larkton onyway, I'll vote for your man, Sir John. They're a' the same to me, an' ye've come first."

"But we will provide a carriage for you, Mr. Gray."

"Then ye may count upon me, Sir John."

To Lord Dunsarg his words were, "Ye're owre late this time, my lord, but I'll gie you a turn next election, if ye like."

Sir John M'Lelland pressed Mr. Easton of The Mains to vote for the Tory candidate, but he declined to do so on conscientious grounds. "I ask you as a personal favour to support Sir Francis," said Sir John. "The county gentlemen expect that I will at least secure for my party the votes of my own tenants. I will esteem it a favour done to myself if you will vote with us, Mr. Easton."

"Sir John," was Mr. Easton's reply, "I am sensible of the kindness you have shown me in the matter of the arrears of my rent; in that respect I have long been at your mercy, and you have been very considerate. Nothing would please me better than to be able to prove how much I appreciate your kindness; but, Sir John, even a poor tenant has a conscience, and mine will not allow me to vote as you wish."

"But," said Sir John, "your conscience might gratify *itself* by granting me this small favour. You have referred to matters upon which I did not wish to enter, and have said that you would be delighted to have an opportunity of showing your gratitude practically. Here is a chance,—I ask your vote as a *personal favour*, while at the same time I am

convinced that Sir Francis Davidson is decidedly the better candidate of the two, and that the policy he supports is the only safe one for our country."

"There we differ, Sir John," said Mr. Easton; "and poor as I am, excuse me for saying that I would not vote against my conscience, even if you were to offer me your whole estate."

"Think better over the matter, Mr. Easton," was Sir John's reply. "I will call again."

"I will always be glad to see you, Sir John, but on this subject I fear my mind will be unchanged," was Mr. Easton's reply, as Sir John rode off.

After various fruitless attempts to induce Mr. Easton to support Sir Francis, Sir John asked him not to vote at all; "for," said he, "surely that cannot be against your conscience: neutrality can outrage no convictions."

"Even there, Sir John," said Mr. Easton, "I cannot comply with your request. It may seem strange to you that a man situated as I am, and as you, alas! know too well, should speak of his conscience or his convictions, but I would consider not voting at all a more cowardly thing than voting on your side."

"Then vote on our side, by all means."

"I cannot, Sir John; come what may, I will, if spared, support Sir George. I know that I am in your

power in other respects, and I heartily thank you for your past forbearance; but to vote for Sir Francis, or not to vote at all, in order to let him get in, goes dead against all my notions of *right;* and excuse me for saying that it would, in my opinion, be buying Cæsar's favour with something that did not belong to Cæsar, but to God"—

"I am very greatly disappointed, Mr. Easton," was Sir John's reply,—"very. My conscience is so perfectly clear, as to its being the duty of every patriot to support politicians holding Sir Francis' opinions, that I am amazed at intelligent men being so far misled, as you seem to me to be, and I still ask you to look at both sides again;" and thus the interview ended.

Lord Dunsarg found among his tenants a Tory, who settled this matter much more quickly than Mr. Easton had done; for, when pressed by his lordship to vote for the Whig candidate, his reply was,—

"That's what you as a Peer hae nae business wi'. I can get a bit dear grund onywhere;—wheat's owre cheap the noo;—'deed I think us farmers wad be a' the better o' a bit gude sharp war;—an' yet you Whigs, they tell me, are tryin' to get some new kind o' 'Corn Laws' brocht into the country, to let grain in frae abroad, to undersell hiz farmers;—I'm for nane o' yer

new-fangled notions;—I'm a Tory, an' I'll vote for the Tory;—so that ends the matter." Lord Dunsarg laughed, and said, "If these are your sentiments, you are perfectly right."

A ten-pounds proprietorship or a fifty-pounds occupancy were the qualifications which then entitled a person to have a vote; but some of the tradesmen in Blinkbonny, who were voters, thought the franchise anything but a privilege—notably Allan Crawford, the house painter. He had no defined political opinions, and was very much afraid of offending any of his customers.

About a month before the day of election, he was "graining," in imitation oak, the wood-work of my parlour, and, observing the pains he took to produce a good effect, I said, "Yours is a pleasant business, Allan; there's so much variety about it, and room for exercising a good deal of taste."

"You are right there," was his reply, as he "dichted" out, with his thumb stuck in a bit of ragged cloth, a few macaroni-like marks; then, stepping back, and moving his head from side to side, he critically scanned the effect, saying, "Yes, Mr. Martin, ours is a *laborious* profession. There's some trades where only the *body* is engaged, and some where it's only the *mind;* but in our trade, Mr. Martin, baith mind an' body's constantly busy—aye on the rack. A painter has to

work hard, and to study effec', an' a' that; really it's a wonder to me hoo we ever stand it at a'."

I referred to the coming election, and asked if he had made up his mind as to which candidate he would support. "No—no quite yet," was his reply. "Ye see I get wark baith frae Lord Dunsarg an' Sir John, an' as much frae the Tories as I get frae the Whigs; baith sides have been at me owre an' owre again, till I'm fair sick o' the very name o' the election. For my pairt, I wish I hadna haen a vote,—it's been a constant batheration for the past twa months; I canna get rest neither nicht nor day.

"Draper Renwick comes slinkin' in to get me to pledge to the Tories, an' I canna shake him off; for, as he says, an' it's quite true, that the Tories has maist interest in the country, being maistly a' landed gentlemen. Then George Marr an' Maister Torrance, baith clever men, comes in an' argues *that weel* on the same side, that I'm fair bamboozled; for, if onything, I raither inclined to the Whigs before I heard them. I just canna settle what to do at a'. I wish they wad let a body alane wi' their elections, but they'll no'. Then," continued he, with a deep sigh, "the maist o' the tradesfolk in the town's Whigs, an' the common folk's maistly a' Radicals; an' at last election they broke the Tories' windows, an' pelted lots o'

them wi' mud, an' ither nasty stuff. They may be keen o' a vote wha like, I hate the very name o't. I sweat like a powny whenever I even think upon't. I canna even get my accounts made out at nicht for them an' their election."

This was true. His wife and he had sat down on the previous night to make out Sir John M'Lelland's account; she was an active, slender woman, and virtually head of the business. After Allan had "scrolled out the account," and made it come "twice to the same thing" in the addition, she asked, "How much does it come to a'thegither, Allan?"

"Thirty-three pounds ten shillings and ninepence."

"What," said she, "only thirty-three pound odds for a' that wark, an' at an election time!—ye must hae missed out a lot. It's far owre little. For just look, there you're needin' new Sabbath-day claes, an' I haena gotten a new gown for twa years, an' the bairns maun hae winter haps, puir things; read owre the *ee*tems."

He had barely begun, when a canvasser on the Whig side was announced. Scarcely had *he* gone, when George Marr called on the same errand on the Tory side, and the poor painter was nearly driven mad. Had he taken George Marr's advice, "Decide at once, be a man, and you will have no further

bother," he would have been unmolested; but his only answer was, "Weel, ye see, I haena made up my mind *yet;* I canna see my way," etc. Such subterfuges render canvassing very disagreeable work, for generally those upon whom canvassing is expected to *tell,* are weak-kneed, unreliable creatures, rendered accidentally important for the time, but really "insignificant bodies" at best.

I will not betray the secrets of Allan's book-keeping. Odds and "extras" suggested by Mrs. Crawford materially increased several of the accounts, thus laboriously and interruptedly made out; but, to do him justice, he retained the power of veto; for there came a point at which he said firmly, "I'll not add another shilling;" and she thus commended his wisdom, "It's maybe as weel to gie yer customers a gude bargain, it'll bring them back again a' the suner."

George Lockhart's reply to Sir Francis was, "With your permission, Sir Francis, I will oppose you, sir;" and to Sir George, "I will support you, Sir George, and I hope by good organization that we will win, sir."

"When shall we send a carriage for you?" asked Sir George's agent.

"I will *carry* myself to the poll. Sir George kindly offers to act as my representative, and I would scorn to put him to unnecessary expense."

Matthew Riddell thought himself a very important man, for he had been appointed a member of the Whig committee. The committee rooms were in the Black Bull Hotel, and the laws against treating were practically ignored. Matthew greatly enjoyed the driving about, the *importance* of his trust, and the refreshments. Beck had provided him with a proverb, which he amplified wonderfully in his canvass.

"Ye ken," said he to waverers, "that in an election 'a freend to a'body's a freend to naebody,' an' that wan vote counts twa; for if there's say a hunder voters equally divided, it's fifty to fifty, but if ane changes sides, it's fifty-wan to forty-nine."

"The Hustings," a wooden "grand-stand," is now a thing of the past; so are "Nominations," at which, a day or two before the election, all the candidates appeared on the hustings, backed by large numbers of their supporters, and each was proposed by an influential elector in a laudatory speech, and seconded by another. After this the candidates addressed the electors, and a show of hands was taken by the Sheriff, who presided on the occasion; but its result was a matter of little importance, for a "poll" was generally demanded, and the day of election was fixed, and announced by the Sheriff. It is well that such matters are conducted more quietly now, for

sometimes the "face to face" scenes between the rival candidates were not becoming, and the offensive missiles, with which candidates and supporters were occasionally pelted, were disgraceful.

The day of election was a busy one in Larkton, the polling station for Blinkbonny. Matthew Riddell was a busy man until about two o'clock, but the *air* of the committee room had been too strong for him; for thereafter he dozed in a corner, and kept inquiring, as the reports from the various districts came in, "Is the young man Absalom yet alive?" until he was assisted into a carriage and quietly conveyed to Blinkbonny.

He learned next morning that his candidate had won by eleven votes, of which, according to his arithmetic, "twa o' them, or at least as gude as twa o' them, were mine, for if *I* had gaen the ither way, it wad only 'a' been nine; indeed, I may say that I wan the election; for a precentor has aye a great influence, an' I brocht at least a dizzen to vote for Sir George."

When I state that the fussy body included such men as Mr. Easton and George Lockhart in this number, my readers can judge of Matthew's title to such credit. Certainly he walked alongside of several staunch Whigs as they went to the poll, and kept importantly saying, "Mind an' say Sir George—Sir George Carse—Sir George Carse, Baronet."

One would have thought that Allan Crawford had been an eminent physician, and that his services were in most urgent request, from the numbers of eager inquiries made by Whigs and Tories about his whereabouts on the day of the election, and the horses they tired out in trying to find him, for—

> "They sought him baith by bower and ha',
> But *Allan* wasna seen."

Victory having declared itself on the popular side, no such ruffianism was displayed as there had been in 1833, when the Tories gained the day. The only windows broken in Blinkbonny were those of Allan Crawford; and some hard-hearted people on both sides said "he was cheap o't." He seemed ashamed of himself; at all events, he made no claim on the county for the damage he had sustained, but quietly replaced the glass, saying to himself, "I hope it'll be a lang, lang time afore there's anither o' thae abom'nable elections."

The long-continued and intense frost in the winter of 1837–38 had a cooling effect, especially amongst curlers, on the hot blood and bitterness of feeling caused by the election. This game they played on a loch within Sir John M'Lelland's policy, but for the first two days of the "ice," the Blinkbonny club mustered badly. Sir John was a keen curler, and to

Draper Renwick he expressed his disappointment that so few players had turned out.

"That need not astonish you, Sir John," was the draper's reply; "the beggarly Whigs may well be ashamed to show face on the loch, after opposing you as they did at the election, although you have so long granted them the privilege of curling here."

"What!" said Sir John, "politics interfere with sport,—not if I can help it! I am as keen a curler as I am a Tory, and it never occurred to me that anybody would think me mean enough to mix up the one with the other. The ice is the very place to

> 'Let Whig and Tory all agree
> To drop their Whig—meg—morum.'

I will call for Mr. Easton to-night and challenge him for to-morrow. You will oblige me by letting it be known in the village, that *all* are welcome to the loch while the ice is good, or you can ask the painter to tell the folks,—it may bring back his popularity."

Next day, Saturday, the "roaring game" was in full swing on the loch, between curlers of all classes and opinions. "Rinkie" was "skip," or the head player of a rink, composed of Sir John, Matthew Riddell, and Allan Crawford. Against him were David Tait, "skip," Mr. Easton, the miller, and Cooper Cranston. The schoolmasters were "skipping"

against each other on a second rink, and there were also some conglomerate rinks.

The game of curling is too well known in Scotland to need explanation. Stones, shaped like Gouda cheeses, weighing from thirty to fifty pounds, with handles attached, are aimed at a centre called a Tee, from a distance of about thirty to forty yards; four players on each side throw two stones each, one alternately, and only those "count" that are within, or upon, a fourteen-feet circle drawn round the Tee.

"What are ye chitterin' there at?" said Rinkie to Allan Crawford; "tak' off thae mittens an' *lead* for me; I never wear gloves, as ye ca' them," said he, holding up his red horny hands. "I gie the Lord's leather to the Lord's w'ather."

"I haena been very weel; I've been fashed wi' lumbagy."

"Lumbagy!—I was bad wi't mysel', an' I swallowed tons o' the doctor's drogs, but I got nae better till I got a bottle o' rheumatic mixtur' frae Beck Riddell, an' afore I had taen four glasses o' hit, I was better. Cast off yer topcoat an' yer mittens, an' gie's a gude lead; an' soop weel when I tell ye, an' ye'll sune come a-heat."

The game was begun. Allan's first stone was a

"Hog," *i.e.* did not cross a line called the "hog-score," which lay about seven yards back from the Tee. "Dicht the potty off yer next stane, Allan," cried Rinkie. Cooper Cranston *led* on David Tait's side; his stone landed on the Tee. "A pat-lid," said Douce Davie.

"Now, Potty ha'," cried Rinkie; "ye see that, jist lie in the face o't; dinna drive." But Allan miscalculated his strength, and his stone swept "owre a' ice," which drew from Rinkie, "Did ye put turpentine on the sole o' that ane, painter?"

The cooper was asked for a "short guard" to his first shot, but his second stone came too far up and lay beside it.

"Eh! Sir John," cried Rinkie, "here's a brace o' paitricks (partridges); split them up;—fine, man—fine;—there they toddle;—that's playin', that's curlin' for ye. Whae could play without ye?"

"Rest that stane, Mr. Easton," cried David; "dinna soop, men—*dinna soop*, I tell ye—he's guardin'. No—no—*soop*—*soop*, bring him in,—he's a grand *side* shot;" and the brooms, or "cowes," as they were called, did their duty. "We're lyin' better noo," said David.

"Guard that wick, Sir John," cried Rinkie; "it's a wee dangerous,—bring 'im owre the hog, I tell ye;—soop,—gie him the 'cowe;'—it's a pity,—he'll no dae. Tak' him aff,—he's a hog. This 'll no' dae, Sir John."

"Noo, Mr. Easton, chap an' lie," said Davie; and Mr. Easton's stone knocked out the winner, and lay in its place. "Played," added David,—"played."

"Ye maun jist follow that, Matthew," cried Rinkie. "No—no—stop. Try the in-wick o' this ither stane, an' ye'll slip aff't an' get the winner;—he has't, *he has't;*—eh na,—it's a pity—he's through 'the port;'" and, after the stone had passed between the two, David swept behind the Tee, and "saw him out o' the house."

"Eh, miller," said David, "guard, ma man, guard. Lay doon a bag o' seeds here;—weel played, sir—shot, an' guarded—'in ahint his grannie's wing.'"

"Matthie, Matthie," cried Rinkie, "tak' yer wull o' the guard—break it off;" but Matthew's stone took the "in-wick" by glancing off the edge of his opponent's *side* stone, and knocking it out of the ring; then it struck the winner and sent it out also, and *lay*.

"What a fluke!" said the miller.

"It was nae fluke," said Matthew; "I saw it was the game! 'at did I, an' I ettled for't, and I did it."

"Grand!" roared Rinkie; "grand a'thegither. Matthie, that's a prize geranum."

"We'll see," said David; "jist drawn-length on the 'guard,' miller, it's oor stane;" and the miller sent the "guard" up within an inch of being first shot.

The two "skips" then went to the further end

and played in rotation; good shots they made, and the result of the first "end" was "Two for Blackbrae."

Before the game was over, Rinkie was in a state of great excitement, and was alternately praising and soundly rating "Potty ha'." Matthew had, however, the greatest variety of directions, drawn from his double profession of gardener and precentor. "Canny this time, Matthie, gie us the 'Bangor;' "The key o' three sharps this time, Matthie;" "Tak' yer hedge-i-bill to this ane;" "Smeek this wasps' byke." To Sir John he was quite as outspoken. "I tell't ye to crack an egg on this stane,—that was liker fellin' a tree;" "Soop, Sir John, soop! what are ye doin' stannin' lookin' about ye for, an' no soopin'? attend to yer game."

David Tait was quieter but quite as wide awake as his opponent, for while Rinkie roared incessantly, David kept his players well "in hand," although often all he said was "Shot." When time was called, the numbers on each side were equal, or *peels,* in curling phraseology. A final end was played; by this time the other "rinks" had finished, and were watching the "tie." It was a well-played head, and only settled by David Tait's last stone worming its way past "guards," and outwicking, *i.e.* touching gently the outside of a stone, so as to move it sufficiently far to be shot. The jumping and cheering, flourishing of brooms

and uproarious demonstrations of excitement which this "mirac'lus shot" drew forth, could be seen and heard,—they cannot be described. It was repeated in a modified degree when Matthew Riddell, after the "beef and greens" dinner of the club, sang with a great many "tirlywirlies" and grace-notes the following curling song.

"CAULD, CAULD, FROSTY WEATHER.

Tune—'There's cauld kail in Aberdeen.'

"When chitterin' birds, on flichterin' wing,
About the barn-doors mingle;
An' bitin' frost, an' crancreuch cauld,
Drive coofs around the ingle:
Then to the loch the curlers hie,
Their hearts as licht's a feather;
Wi' mirth an' glee, and mark the Tee,
In cauld, cauld, frosty weather.

"Our buirdly leaders, doon white ice
Their whinstanes dour send snoovin';
An' birks an' brooms ply hard before,
When o'er the hog-score movin'.
Till cheek by jowl, within the brough,
They're laid 'side yin anither,
Then round the Tee we flock wi' glee,
In cauld, cauld frosty weather.

"Wi' canny hand they neist play doon
Their stanes o' glibber metal;
Yet bunkers aften send aglee,
Altho' they weel did ettle.
'Now strike! No, draw! Come fill the port!
They roar, and cry, and blether;
As round the Tee we flock wi' glee,
In cauld, cauld frosty weather.

"A stalwart chield, to redd the ice,
Drives roarin' doon like thunder;
Wi' awfu' crash the dooble guards
At ance are burst asunder.
Rip-rappin' on, frae random wicks,
The winner gets a yether,
Then round the Tee we flock wi' glee,
In cauld, cauld frosty weather.

"Our chief, whase skill an' steady arm
Gain mony a bonspeil denner,
Cries, 'Open wide! Stand off behin'!
Now haste! come, show the winner!'
He throws, he roars, he rides him out
The length o' ony tether;
Huzzas, wi' glee, rise round the Tee,
In cauld, cauld, frosty weather.

"But now the sun gangs doon the lift,
The wind blaws snell an' freezin';
When straicht we bicker aff in haste
To where the ingle's bleezin'.
In Curlers' ha' sae bien an' snug,
About the board we gather;
Wi' mirth an' glee, sirloin the Tee,
In cauld, cauld, frosty weather.

"In canty cracks, an' sangs, an' jokes,
The nicht drives on wi' daffin';
An' mony a kittle shot is taen
While we're the toddy quaffin'.
Wi' heavy heart, and laith, we part,
But promise to forgather,
Around the Tee, neist morn wi' glee,
If cauld, cauld, frosty weather."

CHAPTER XV.

JAMIE MURRAY'S MARRIAGE.

"What though our way in life through the brambles may have been,
Yet here and there a rose amang the prickles we hae seen;
We a' hae had our troubles, sirs, but wherefore should we fret?
In spite o' a' that's come an' gane, we're here to tell them yet."

W. Finlay.

THE severe winter of 1837-38 caused a good deal of distress among the poor folks in Blinkbonny, and, at a meeting of charitable ladies, it was resolved to establish a "Soup-kitchen," where at least one plain but substantial meal could be had daily by the most necessitous. Mrs. Clark, the wife of a retired merchant, who had the faculty of managing such matters admirably, was convener of the acting committee, and she was ably supported by Miss Park, Miss Stewart, and others associated with her in carrying out the scheme.

They unanimously agreed to ask Mrs. Rankine to undertake the preparation of the soup, which she readily and effectually did. By the surrounding gentry and the well-to-do villagers contributions were sent in kind and in money; and, while Mrs.

Clark and her active coadjutors called for the "heads of households," Bell Cameron, the worthy servant of the Manse, called personally for the cooks and general servants. She began her begging by saying that "she was bringin' to their *door* the blessin' o' them that were ready to perish;" and, when relating her experience, she had the following division of classes. "The 'gentry'—their cooks were very frank—rather overly, in fact, although they laughed at me seekin' things that they for ord'nar' threw out. Then the 'quality' —their cooks were very glad to get quit o' some things that I wadna 'a' taen, had they no' gotten orders frae their mistresses. Then 'the weel-to-do folk's' cooks kent fine what I wanted. An' 'the trades folk an' the town's folk' thocht at first that they had nacthing befittin'; but it was surprisin' hoo much they fand out they could help us wi', in the course o' oor cracks; an' a'body was glad to see me on sic an eerant."

The result was, that many a starving family got a comfortable meal, which they would not otherwise have had. And, after it was dark, Mrs. Rankine's children, Bell, and some others, handed comforting parcels and pitchers into households, that were most thankful to receive them, but who did not wish their poverty to be generally known.

Dr. Stevenson, in his daily rounds, urged the farmers and others to relieve outlying cases, and he called upon two wealthy bachelors on this mission. "Come awa', Doctor," said one of them. "We're glad to see you. Ye'll take yer denner wi' us. We never were better prepared. We killed a coo last week, an' we had anither dee'd, so that we hae a 'rough' house the noo."

As the doctor did not know from which cow that day's dinner was taken, he declined the invitation, and he also abstained from asking anything from *them* for his poor patients, excepting meal and potatoes.

Sir John M'Lelland gave work to some of the "unemployed" on Mr. Easton's farm, and the result was highly satisfactory. The Mains crop was excellent that year, so much so that it very materially improved Mr. Easton's position; and next year also the farm did so well, that he got square with the world, and became prosperous. Mrs. Easton, however, was still a confirmed invalid, requiring and receiving careful nursing from Lily. Dr. Forrest called pretty often, partly professionally, partly as a friend. Sometimes Lily and he spent a few minutes alone in the dining-room. What passed I cannot tell; once or twice when he came out, he looked thoughtful, and

almost sad, certainly sad for *him*, but before he had ridden many yards he muttered something very warm regarding her, and very wise about patience.

Early in 1839 he resolved to commence practising on his own account in a neighbouring county, and, when telling Mrs. Easton this, she said with much feeling:

"Gaun awa', Doctor,—gaun to begin to practise for yersel'? I'll miss ye sair; an' Lily will miss ye as much as me, if no' mair. It'll be a heartbreak to baith o' us. Will it no', Lily?"

Lily *said* little, she looked volumes. Her eyelids were wet, and her voice quivered, as she said, "It will make a sad blank, mother; we will *both* lose a friend."

Dr. Forrest tried to change the subject, but he found very little to say, either in the sick-room, or in the dining-room, to which Miss Easton and he had gone. She *began* to ask about the district he was going to, but she suddenly stopped, and looked at the stuffed fox and its cub which lay under the sideboard. He twirled his riding switch, and was attempting to describe the scene of his future labours, but he succeeded badly,—so badly, that he left the room abruptly, without even shaking hands with Miss Easton, and she sat for some time after he had gone,

quietly thinking on her mother's words,—"Lily will miss ye as much as me, if no' mair."

When the day of Dr. Forrest's leaving Blinkbonny arrived, his last call was at The Mains. Mrs. Easton was greatly affected, and showed it. Lily and he were quite as much affected, but by a strong mutual effort they restrained themselves from any visible manifestation of emotion.

After spending some time alone in the dining-room, Lily accompanied him to the door, and wished him "God-speed;" feelingly and *noisily* seconded by Babbie Gaw; but when the strains of Nicol Fairbairn's bagpipes, playing "*Bonnie Charlie's noo awa'*," were borne upon the evening breeze, she wished that Nicol would play some other tune, and yet she liked to *hum* "Better lo'ed ye canna be; will ye no' come back again?"

Mrs. Easton's illness was a very long one, and local newspapers passed between Dr. Forrest and Lily Easton for many years; he paid occasional visits to The Mains, but there ever lay between these two true hearts the old barrier of "mighty circumstance," which they still concurred in pronouncing "impassable." Even now, he in his fifty years bachelorhood, and she in her advanced spinsterhood, have as warm hearts towards each other,—I had almost

said as young *hearts*—as they had, when rattling Charlie Forrest stuck the forget-me-nots in Lily Easton's hat, long, long ago, in the garden at Greenknowe.

If they have not been allowed to share each other's joys and sorrows as man and wife, both have at least, whilst in patience possessing their souls, largely increased the joys and soothed the sorrows of others. And, as a natural result, such services relieved their own full hearts, because love, like mercy, is

> "Twice blessed:
> It blesseth him that gives and him that takes;
> 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest."

Much of the warm attachment that Dr. Forrest's patients feel towards him, on account of his wonderful tenderness to them, might be traced to Lily Easton. And *as much* of the warm *out*flowings of her love as a daughter, a sister, and an aunt, unknown even to herself, are the *over*flowings of the perennial fountain, which fifty years ago reflected the image of Charlie Forrest, and which calmly reflects it still. One of his friends told me lately that "Dr. Forrest was always like a bridegroom." The "wherefore" is not difficult to find.

Nicol Fairbairn's son Willie, having learned to be a saddler with his father, was working at his trade in Larkton. Annie Rankine had now grown up to be

a handsome young woman, and Willie paid her more attention than the mere fact of them both being Blinkbonny folks seemed to warrant.

Willie was not, however, so strict in many respects as his worthy father, although he inherited a little of his hasty manner. Jamie Murray, when business led him to Larkton,—and it required very little to do so, —made it a point to call for Annie Rankine. He always brought the latest news from her mother, for he did not confine his visits to the Sabbath morning ones; nor did wee Strachan, who was now old enough and sensible enough to find his way safely to Mrs. Rankine's, where he still greatly enjoyed seeing the live stock, especially a white "tappit hen," which was "his ain."

Willie Fairbairn was jealous of Jamie's visits to Annie, though she did not know this. But the evident delight with which she retailed the budget of home news that Jamie brought, accompanied as this was by warm expressions regarding his kindness to her mother, awakened disquieting thoughts in Willie's breast.

Fairbairn was, however, wise enough to keep these thoughts to himself, until the evening of one of the Larkton fairs. He had been with some young fellows, as was often the case in these days, in a public-house,

and had taken too much whisky. "When wine is in, wit is out." Jamie Murray had called that day, but had gone back to Blinkbonny three hours ago. Annie was full of home news, and had begun to tell them to Willie, when he said:

"Has that scaurcraw Big Murray been here the day again? I wonder ye alloo yon starved-lookin' thing o' a tailor to darken yer door."

"Willie," said Annie, "dinna say a word against Jamie Murray. He's a weel-doin', heart-kind, respectable cratur, an' he has been very kind to mine an' to me."

"He's what?" said Fairbairn loudly, so loudly that Annie looked closely at him, and observed that he was "touched with drink." "He's a big saft, low-bred, useless anatomy o' a man"—

"Stop, Willie," said Annie, "ye're the waur o' drink. I'll gie ye water to wash yer face an' yer hands, an' ye'll gang straicht hame if ye're wise."

"Me the waur o' drink!" said he; "I'll soon show you that. I *am not*," and he tried to kiss her. She struggled to get out of his grip, but finding this likely to expose him, she tried to pacify him. I will not record what he said, they were the words of a half-tipsy man, frothy and foolish. At length she got free, and was filling a basin of cold water for him to

freshen himself, when he reeled out of the house, using expressions very unlike those sanctioned under "the old economy."

He was very jaunty on his next visit, and tried to laugh the thing over; if the truth must be told, he had taken a glass of whisky to increase his courage. He came in with a rattling air, and again attempted to kiss Annie. She, however, was watchful, self-possessed, and distant. His first words were, "Weel, Annie, when did you hear frae Whip-the-cat?"

"Willie," was her reply, "ye dinna like me,—ye *canna* like me,—or ye wad never *speak* to me as ye did last week, let alane carryin' on wi' uncivil nonsense. Nacbody that *really* likit a body wad 'a' hurt their feelin's as ye did mine. Ye hae a smell o' whisky even the noo, an' oh! for yer ain sake, Willie, never touch't, an' for yer mother's sake an' yer worthy father's. What wad the minister o' Broomhill say if he saw you—a young man like you—the waur o' drink?"

Fairbairn tried to make light of the matter, and again attempted to seize her hand, and to kiss her; but she stretched herself to her full length, and said:

"William Fairbairn, if you lay a hand on me, I'll cry for the maister. A man that's no' true to himsel' can never be true till his wife. I'm heart-sorry to see ye behavin' as ye're doin'. If ye'll sit quietly

doon, I'll speak to ye for auld langsyne, an' for yer ain gude; but there can be nae mair between us, at least for mony a 'ear, until ye fairly tak' yersel' up, if even then. An' as for Jamie Murray, he's naething to me, an' I'm naething to him, ony mair than auld acquaintances; but I would rather marry 'big saft Murray,' as ye ca' him, than I wad *you*, if last week's a sample o' yer conduc'."

Fairbairn restrained himself with difficulty, and he soon got tired of Annie's lecture. He was too fond of amusement and "daffin'" to care about the interchange of higher thoughts and emotions. He only called once or twice after this, and, luckily for himself, he returned to his father's shop, where he behaved better; but Annie and he never "made it up," for the satisfactory accounts which Robert Easton sent home from New Zealand induced him to emigrate to that colony, where he settled to steady work, and became a prosperous man.

Robert Easton, shortly after his arrival in New Zealand, accidentally met with a relative of Tibbie Murray's, who had been a most successful colonist. He showed great attention to Robert when he learned that he hailed from Blinkbonny, and, on making particular inquiries about the Murrays, he was annoyed to find that Jamie was a tailor. He at once wrote, urging

him either to come to New Zealand or to qualify himself for a learned profession, and he sent him money to place this within his power.

Jamie was at once pleased and surprised to learn that Robert Easton had actually arrived safely in New Zealand, and that he was able to "stick on," although he *had* to walk "upside doon." But nothing would induce him even to *consider* the question of his own emigration, partly for reasons already spoken of, and partly for wee Strachan's sake, of whom he had said, "Him an' me will never part as lang as baith o' us is leevin'." Nor would he entertain the idea of giving up tailoring.

"I had plenty o' the schule," said he; "catch me riskin' ony mair palmies. An' as to ony ither trade, there's no' a better trade in the world than my ain. It's because it's that gude that a'body mak's a fule o' us. Jist let them. A smith's sair wrocht, an' he micht be killed shoein' a wild horse; a joiner has to mak' coffins, an' gang wi' them; a slater may fa' off a house, an' a painter off a lether, an' be killed; a baker has awfu' headfu's to carry; makin' shoon maun be hard wark for the hands, an' it's dirty; masons an' siclike tradesmen's idle a' winter, an' in wat weather tae. But a *tailor* can aye be dry an' clean; he loses nae time gaun to his wark or comin' frae't; an' there's

one thing *certain*, that they'll never get ony machinery to shue. The needle will aye beat the cleverest o' them. Wi' *a*' their inventions, they'll *never* invent a shuin'-machine, like the spinnin'-jennies an' the pooer-looms, that tak's the bread awa' frae the puir weavers."

Many a man besides Big Murray has outlived his own prophecy.

Accordingly, he got Simon Lockhart to write a most elaborate letter to his colonial relative, thanking him for his remittance, and for his good advice, and stating that he would be obliged to him if he would allow him to "set up" a cloth-shop in Blinkbonny.

Nearly a year elapsed before any reply was received. When this came, it not only sanctioned Jamie's proposal, but it contained something which enabled him to stock the shop comfortably, as well as to provide himself with a blue coat and yellow buttons, a beaver hat, a buff waistcoat, and suitable continuations; indeed, he became the dandy tailor of Blinkbonny. It also put it in his power to be kind to all the Gemmells, and this pleased him quite as much as anything else could have done.

Simon Lockhart, Jamie's amanuensis, had availed himself of the offer of my old Greek books, and occasionally he took the *Rudiments* with him to Strachan Gemmell's to con over the Greek verb. One day he

was "grinding" up the perfect passive of "tupto,"—I strike,—while the two tailors were busily sewing away on the table. Simon began to repeat aloud:—"Tetummai, Tetupsai, Tetuptai; Tetummethon, Tetupthon, Tetupthon," etc.

Strachan and Jamie ceased work, looked at him, then at one another inquisitively, and shook their heads, then at Simon again, who kept repeating his "Tetummai, Tetupsai, Tetuptai."

"What in a' the world's that ye're sayin'?" said Strachan in bewilderment,—"Te-tum-um—Te-tum-um—Te-tup-tum—Te-ta;—are ye a' there? that's the queerest jibber-jabber ever I heard."

"That's Greek," said Simon,—"the Greek verb I strike; Tupto—Tupso—Tetepha—Tetummai."

"If that's Greek, it's the maist bairnly nonsense ever was oot. Wee Strachan could beat that, te-tum-um—te-tum-um—te-fal-da-riddle-dee."

After Simon had been two sessions at college, he far outshone his father in the matter of big words. Moreover, his pronunciation was something marvellous. To hear him repeat his father's favourite word "organization," was like a mixture of a magnified American nasal twang and the "mewing" of a cat. As a boy he spoke honest Scotch; and had he taken time and pains, he could have become a fair speaker

of English. But, like too many "rising" young men, he wanted to speak "fine" all at once, and he thought that he succeeded admirably. When asked, more in irony than in earnest, how he managed to pick up the English accent so well, he said :

"Quite easily; I just give the words a "tcheaciou" (chew); but it is easier to imitate than to spell, or to convey, even by a combination of all the vowels of the alphabet, the cat-like sound of the last three letters, for it was a long-drawn MEW. This affected style rendered him ridiculous in the eyes of everybody, and earned for him the nickname of "Pretty Poll." It also marred his popularity and his usefulness, for in after life he never got rid of this "high-falutin," pompous tone.

After his third session at college, he was employed as a town missionary in Edinburgh. George Marr, who was now master of works on Blinkbonny estate, and in a fair way to become the "factor," had gone in to see the Scott Monument, and to study its beautiful proportions and details. He met Simon accidentally, and, after a short chat about Blinkbonny folks, George asked him how he was engaged.

"Oh!" said Simon magniloquently, "I am labouring in the Grassmarket."

George looked at his dress, and said, "Labouring,

Mr. Simon? Labouring in the Gressmarket? Ay? Ye're very weel 'put on' for a labouring man. What kind of work are you at?"

"Oh," said Simon patronizingly, "I am labouring as a town missionary in the Grassmarket, a most responsible and trying occupation."

"I beg your pardon," said George; "I might have thought on that, had you been older."

After they parted, George said to himself, "My young birkie, I doubt ye'll no' dae muckle gude, till ye think less o' yer fine English and mair about your Maister's work;—'*most responsible and trying*,' certainly;—but—but—but"—

On George Marr's return from Edinburgh, he was waylaid by Strachan Gemmell, who, at Jamie's request, wished to consult him about "where he thocht wad be the best place to start a cloth-shop." Willie A'thing, the most general merchant in the county, as his name very fully indicates, had died, and his place was to be sold.

George knew it well, and undertook to manage the purchase "quietly." In due time Willie's name disappeared, and a long signboard soon stretched itself above the door, extending on each side as far as the outer lintel of the two front windows, bearing in bold letters the inscription:—

"James Murray, Tailor and Clothier."

Positions were now reversed, greatly to Jamie's confusion for many months; for Strachan was only "foresman" now, and he seemed to enjoy telling customers that they "would need to see the maister himsel'." Jamie could not induce his mother to leave the old house "an' come an' stop wi' him." He could not even prevail upon her to abandon her peripatetic fondness for her "ark," and for "trampin' blankets;" the old couple still remained in the old nest, but Annie Gemmell and wee Strachan took up their quarters with Jamie.

It was fortunate for Jamie that Annie was with him, for he was a poor arithmetician at first, and it took him a long time before he had confidence in his "countin'." Young Benjie Cranstoun, however, about a year after Jamie started business, made Annie his wife; and her younger sister had hardly been twelve months his housekeeper and shopkeeper, before George Marr, junior, became a regular visitor on the Tuesday and Friday nights.

"Wee Strachan," however, was "a fixture," except when he was at Mrs. Rankine's; and one Sabbath morning, when the two paid their weekly visit, Annie appeared, fresh and rosy after her brisk walk from Larkton. Wee Strachan "took to her," and even

when she went to church, the poor boy would not leave her. It was his first churching since his baptism; the bell at the Established Church had always frightened him, but there was no bell at the "Meetin'-house." Jamie could not prevail on the boy even to go home with him; he clung to Annie, and when the time came for her to return to Larkton, Strachan *would* go too. There was nothing for it but that Jamie must humour the boy, and convoy Annie so far on the road. They had reached the Fillies' Bridge, where they sat down to rest by the burn-side, and tried to induce Strachan to return to Blinkbonny. He *would* have Annie to go back with him, and kept saying, "Will you no' come an' bide wi' Jamie, an' be my Annie and his?" It was the longest sentence he had ever uttered, and Jamie and Annie between them followed it up,—she by promising Strachan to do so, and Jamie by saying "He hopit she wad keep her word."

Annie hardly quite meant all that this implied, but she said so shyly, "she would see," that Jamie pawkily pursued the subject, until their hands were clasped and their troth was plighted. Strachan was only induced to go back by being told that "his cat wadna get its supper till he got hame," and he now became impatient at Jamie standing so long on the parapet of the bridge, watching Annie's retreating form,

—longer than he had done when the little Italian boy disappeared on the same road many years ago.

Jamie Murray's marriage was a great affair, a very great affair, both for him and Blinkbonny, for it was a "house-heating" and a "home-coming' combined; and, despite Mrs. Rankine's strongly-expressed desire to have everything as quiet as possible, the arrangements were left to young Benjie Cranstoun, Beck Riddell, and George Lockhart, with general instructions "to see that everything was mensefu' an' wiselike, an' to hae a royal supper in the 'Black Bull.'"

The marriage itself was quiet enough. Jamie Dunbar, in a glorious waistcoat, gave away the bride. The Rev. Mr. Morrison tied the knot; and Nicol Fairbairn, with his bagpipes, headed the procession to the "Black Bull." On its way, the Laigh Road Parliament swelled its ranks. Willie Rankine occupied the chair, supported, right and left, by Matthew Riddell and George Marr. Jamie Dunbar was croupier, supported by Jamie Murray on the right and Simon Lockhart on the left, the arrangement being, that all the women-folks sat in the middle, and the men at each end.

Tibbie Murray never was so braw all her life; her "cap" was like a flower-show, and contrasted unfavourably with Mrs. Rankine's neat, plain widow's

cap. After ample justice had been done to the substantial fare, the toasts and the speeches commenced. Some of these would require a chapter for themselves, —not Jamie's,—for, in reply to the carrier's heartily-expressed good wishes for the young couple, in which he hoped "that they wad lang pu' thegither, an' never reist, but, like my 'Copenhagen,' aye keep the croon o' the causey," he merely said, "I'm much obleeged till ye a' for drinkin' oor healths, an' I propose the health o' a' the present comp'ny."

Simon Lockhart's speech, in proposing "The Bridesmaid," was, to use Matthew Riddell's words, "a jum'le o' lang-nebbit words warpit thegither, an' spoken for a' the world like twa cats fechtin'."

Thomas Baillie would propose "Tibbie Murray's health," and spoke of "her ark being like the new gas-holder, that they yince were a' sae feared for, but that noo lichtit a' the place. I challenge her," continued he, "for my partner for the first dance; an' if she dances as she tramps blankets, I wad advise ye a' no' to come owre near us."

George Marr proposed Mrs. Rankine, "As fine a specimen of a Scotch woman, wife and mother, as ever lived; or, as auld George Brown had said about her the other day, 'she had done worthily in Ephratah, and was famous in Bethlehem.'"

Willie made a very feeling reply. His mother added, "Thank ye, George. If *he* had been here himsel', he would 'a' been as hearty as ony o' ye, for he did like to see folk happy."

There were also songs and songs. The question of a dance, too, had been keenly discussed, and resulted in a "We'll see." Nicol Fairbairn was the principal objector, and said something about the "Old Economy."

Thomas Baillie was nettled at this, and replied angrily, indeed irreverently, "Man, Nicol, I wonder to hear a man that's sae keen o' music, an' *dance* music, an' poetry o' a' kinds, as you are, objeck to dancin'. It's jist the poetry o' motion. A' young life's fu' o' motion. Look at the lambs friskin' about the braes, a kittlin' chasin' its ain tail, or young dougs dancin' an' daffin' wi' ane another. An' forbye, it's nane forbudden by ony o' the economies, as ye ca' them, if it's keepit in its richt place,—among freends and kent folk. Ye read often about dancin' amang gude folk on great occasions, an' *hearty* dancin' tae; for ye canna but own that whan the prodigal came hame, there was not only dancin', but there maun 'a' been *hoochin'*, for the auld economy dry stick o' a brither heard it oot-bye, an' grum'l'd about it, as ye're doin'."

But the question had been quietly arranged before

this, and the "big room" was ready for the dancers. Thomas rose, and, laying his hand on Nicol's shoulder, said, "Come awa', Nicol, blaw up yer chanter, man, an' let us hae 'Tullochgorum;'" and, strange as it may seem, Nicol played, and played well, to enable other people to dance. Heartily, old and young went at it for a short time; thereafter the younger folks had the "floor" to themselves, and an occasional song formed a pleasant interlude.

Willie Rankine had remodelled and extended his schoolboy rhyme about "The Blinkie," until it became virtually a "Blinkie Gazetteer." He sang the following verses at Jamie Murray's special request :—

THE BLINKIE BURN.—(W. RANKINE.)

Air—Aiken Drum.

I fain wad sing o' the Blinkie burn,
Frae whaur, out the Hagholm Slack,
It seeps to the sheughs frae the green well e'es,
An' the moss hags saft an' black.
Then it gathers itsel' in the green Hagholm,
An' amang the seggs plays jinkie,
Till its wee stream gullers round the Carlin' Stane
At the well-head pool o' the Blinkie.

There's wee bits o' rills come tricklin' doon
Frae the Hagshaw braes, where the heather,
An' sweet bog myrtle, an' bracken sae green,
An' heath-bell grow thegither.
An' yin by yin, as they dribble in,
Though nane's as thick's my pinkie,
Aye help, an' help, to mak' the wee burn
A bigger an' bonnier Blinkie.

An' a' through the dell it toddles an' sings,
Whiles ripplin' owre the shingle,
Whiles brattlin' doon a corkscrew linn,
Whiles lost to sicht in the dingle.
Aye gatherin' the wee burns intil its bed,
Till ye come to the Mill o' Rinkie,—
Ye'll kenn'd by the smell, and the pockfu's o' banes
That are grund by Tam Gray an' the Blinkie.

Then through by the holm, behind Broomhill,
Wi' its gardens an' bonnie flowers,
An' its blue-roofed Antiburgher kirk,
Where I've chittered for three lang hours
On a wintry day,—no' a spunk o' fire
To stop the chitterin' chinkie!
My thochts on "keepin' the puddin' het,"
As we did on the slides o' the Blinkie.

An' the Fillies' Den—ah! the Fillies' Den—
Was a world to laddies an' lassies;
The taen, wi' dookin' an' guddlin' trouts,
The tither made bannets o' thrashes.
There were strawberries, rasps, an' hazel nuts,
An' our fingers an' lips were inky
Wi' blaeberries, crawcroups, bram'les, an' slaes,
That we pu'd on the banks o' the Blinkie.

An' the dookin' pool, wi' its divin' rock,
Where canny Jamie Murray
Got an awfu' fleg, when the nigger's face
Swam round the craig in a hurry.
Jamie scrauchled out, he flew past his claes,
An' fast to the wood did linkie,
An' lang he shivered before he wad risk
The "yin" that fizzed in the Blinkie.

Syne down by Blinkbonny the burnie rins,
Wi' its glintin', glimmerin' sheen;
Past Nancie's Knowe, an' the auld meal mill,
An' the benty Annie Green.

Through the Fillies' Brig, down the Auld Kirk stream,
Whare the skippin' wagtails jinkie,
An' the water-craws an' the water-hens
Jouk about in the bed o' the Blinkie.

An' the cooper's logs, by the Laigh Road dam,
An' the jumpin' we had owre them,
For the laddies frae Lockhart's and Torrance's schule
Believed they were laid there for them.
An' the can'le wark, an' the roperie,
An' the smiddy's constant clinkie,
An' the spinnin' mill, an' the carrier's cart,
An' the bleachin' green by the Blinkie.

There's no' in the land a bonnier strath,
Frae Eddystone lichthouse to Yell,
Than our ain ; frae the tap o' high Dunsarg
To Hagholm Slack, an' the Fell.
Ye may gang far south, 'neath the burning sun,
Far north, whare he scarce plays winkie,
But ye'll see nae sicht that can bear the gree
Wi' the bonnie burn o' the Blinkie.

Loud and long was the applause that interrupted Willie's song at several of the topical references, and that greeted its close. The party broke up, and, headed by Nicol Fairbairn playing a wedding march, they saw the happy couple safely housed ; where, ever since, till now, there has been as much happiness and comfort as falls to the lot of ordinary mortals. Not even Mrs. Rankine senior, or Mrs. James Murray, or Mrs. Strachan Gemmell, or Mrs. Riddell, or all put together, made more of Jamie the second than " wee Strachan " did, for he watched the cradle as faithfully as " Moffat " guarded the father from Hugh Wallace's

fury, several years before. Willie Rankine was instructed to procure a first-class "cutter" for Jamie's extending business, and this, coupled with his wife's tact, made him prosper so much, that even Kennedy, the opposition tailor, found it more profitable to buy from him than from Draper Renwick, who was almost the only man in Blinkbonny that grudged Jamie his success. There was, moreover, no happier home in the parish than Mr. and Mrs. Murray's, and no happier inmate of it than Strachan, who, however, is no longer "wee."

When the Rev. John M'Nab's marriage came off, Lily Easton was one of the bridesmaids, and she sweetly expressed the feelings of many hundreds in Blinkbonny towards Miss Stewart, in the song which she sang, "Wha's at the Window," especially in these lines:—

> "It's no' that she's Jamie's ava, ava,
> It's no' that she's Jamie's ava,
> That mak's me sae eerie when a' the lave's cheerie,
> But it's just that she'll aye be awa', awa',
> It's just that she'll aye be awa'."

And, "north of the Forth," Mrs. M'Nab still continues her works of faith and labours of love.

I had proceeded thus far with these "More Bits," when my old friend Andrew Taylor, having returned from spending the month of August in Crieff, called

to inquire about the new book. I handed him the proof-sheets. A few days thereafter he brought them back to me, and said testily,—

"There's yer 'More Bits.' I canna comprehend what ever tempted ye to say as much about Jamie Murray. Ye made the same mistake wi' Bell Barrie, but she was worth a hunder o' him."

"It was yourself," said I, "that asked me to write about the schools, and especially about Big Murray."

"Maybe," was his reply; "but that wasna to say that ye should write nearly a hale book about him, as the Musselburgh doctor did about the Dalkeith tailor, Mansie Wauch."

"I did not intend," said I, "to treat of him at any length, but he would pop up so persistently at every corner, that I could not get rid of him. Try to write some bits yourself, and you will"—

"I hope," replied he, "I'll never be sae sair left to mysel'; if I do, I would take some better subject than Murray an' common folk like him."

"There we differ," was my reply. "My aim has been to depict the everyday life of common people, and to recall the homely incidents of an old-fashioned Scottish village."

I hope the public will find these in *More Bits from Blinkbonny.*

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